

, 1966



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AUGUST 19, 1966

Chavan

A MONTH TO REMEMBER

Virad C. Chaudhuri: *The Day Of Repentance* ● Utpal
Dutt: *O Blood! Blood! Blood!* ● Chavan's Border Disclo-
ures ● *The Lean Season Begins* ● *Light On Tenali* ● *The*
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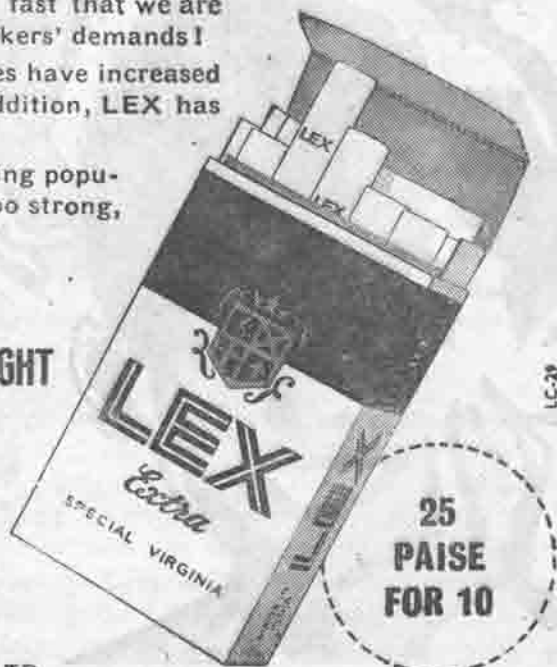
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THIS AUGUST

THIS year the Congress is going all out to impress people in its own bloody way that August is a month to remember. It is, for diverse reasons. Twenty-five years ago Rabindranath died in August, and no Indian to date has been able to fill the void. In August 1942 the Congress Working Committee passed the Quit India resolution in Bombay and cheered up when the police arrived, because the leaders, according to their subsequent admission, had no plan of action. The people took up the challenge in a heroic but disjointed way—for the Congress to cash in on it later. Towards August 1943 innumerable men, women and children began to stumble into Calcutta from riceless villages, with a lean and hungry look. But they were not dangerous and died in the streets like flies. In August 1945 mushroom clouds over Hiroshima heralded a terror weapon and the cold war. A year later the streets of Calcutta again filled with corpses, and the stench, physical as well as moral, was unbearable, so unbearable that in August 1947 the Congress agreed to partition the country. Thanks to the wearisome condition of Indian humanity, the national movement, born under one law, to another was bound. No wonder that it was self-division, for the Congress, ever since the early thirties, had been scared of mass movements, even of joint Hindu-Muslim action against the Raj. Unity at the barricades during and after the Rashid Ali Day demonstrations in Calcutta was unholy unity, according to Gandhiji.

In the eighteen Augusts since 1947 many things have happened, but our memory after independence has been so strained by the instant glory and the continuing misery that the events are blurred. Moreover, 1947 marked a watershed, making it easier for the middle-aged to look back at what had occurred before and at the time of the transfer of power than recall the immediate past—history since 1947 having had no significant break in this country. Maybe each constituent unit of the Republic has its own August story. On the all-India scale, it requires an effort to recall that last year's war with Pakistan began in August; perhaps one should be grateful that fighting has not been resumed to celebrate the anniversary, though there is no dearth of invigorating rumours of a massive build-up in both India and Pakistan. As a rhymed couplet now current in West Bengal goes—When people want something to eat/On borders drums begin to beat.

There has been no war with outsiders, but this August will be remembered for the police offensive in most States with the connivance of the Centre. It is almost a war on the people who want Independence spelled out in kilograms of wheat and rice. Assam has gone through the familiar ordeal. Here, Durgapur may not be enough (if the West Bengal Labour Minister can meet the representatives of an unrecognised trade union, why couldn't the General Manager of the Durgapur Steel Works?). Restless tea garden workers in North Bengal, as in Durgapur, will see strange police faces, from Kashmir, Punjab, Andhra or Orissa. Ten battalions from outside are to be stationed in West Bengal. Plans are said to be ready for mass arrests towards the end of this month; goondas are being groomed and it would not be at all difficult for bomb-throwing

agents to discredit a leftist movement and prove the Nanda thesis of a conspiracy of violence and sabotage. Jails are being cleared and got ready. If this plan of action goes through, this August may well begin the process of final disillusionment with parliamentary democracy. Not many tears need be shed, however, if the emperor goes without his Westminster clothes and appears as he is. In that case the common sense and patriotism of the Indian people, to which Mr Nanda referred in his August 15 broadcast, might well prompt them to tackle the new internal threat by other means, if necessary.

Recolonisation

Persons single-minded in their devotion to gimmickry, and possessing minds uncluttered by any trace of ideology, can achieve a great deal in the way of ruining a nation even in course of a brief twelve months. This is what the span from August 1965 to August 1966 proves. Never was so much harm done in so short a time. That the harvest would be pretty bad was already beginning to be obvious in August. But our rulers had other decks to clear. Pakistan had to be given a bloody nose, and so plans for providing food for the people had to be shelved. Some sort of a Food Corporation had set up a rickety office somewhere in the city of Madras, but nobody was yet bothering to utilise its machinery to gather the surplus food from the affluent areas. In so far as procurement of food was concerned, sovereignty belonged to the State Governments, and that was that. There was no question of planning ahead for food, not even planning ahead for a few short months. Meanwhile, even as the first Pakistan Pattons were getting stalled along the Amritsar-Lahore sectors, our good friends the Consortium countries promptly cut off the flow of aid. But our leaders were still quite a bit heady with military pseudo-success. Don't give us all that jazz, said they, we can do without aid, we will be self-reliant, we will marry defence and development in a wondrous plan, and turn back on filthy foreign lucre. Those were the days of thunder, at Chowpatty, at the Brigade Parade Ground, at the Ramlila Maidan. Glee-filled the hearts of the professional progres-

sives, who suddenly discovered their salvation in the letting of patriotic gore.

It was too good to last beyond two or three winks. The war was ended; the racketeers and black-marketeers took over. Even as prices soared, there was a planned de-escalation of Fourth Plan aspirations. Suddenly, Mr Subramaniam slinked his way in. A tribute to Indian plasticity, the slogan of self-reliance underwent a magnificent sea-change. 'No salvation without importation', said Mr Subramaniam, adding, by the implication of his actions, that there was no humiliation that was not worth the price. The Union Minister for Food and Agriculture can indeed be proud of his achievements: domestic output of food fell by 13 million tons from the previous year's figure, but this shortfall was more than made up by the outturn of our begging endeavours abroad.

If all this foreign bounty could not alleviate the distress in the deficit areas and prevent deaths from "malnutrition" in places such as Orissa, rulers and administrators could hardly be blamed: after all, it is sacrifices such as these which make the great venture of democracy so tantalizing. And since nothing must be done to damage the prospects of democratic survival in the country, New Delhi ideologues took time out to prepare a new interpretation of the Leninist thesis. True, the policy of the principle is the best policy, but since the principle at issue is of survival, one must pursue the policy of survival. Any effort to make the economy more viable through internal reorganization will disturb the entrenched class interests, and will therefore be inimical to self-preservation. Survival could therefore come only through a sell-out to foreign interests, provided a satisfactory *quid pro quo* was marked out. Once the nettle of the new principle was grasped, spectacular development followed. The World Bank and the US administration want cement to be decontrolled; cement is decontrolled. The Bank and the Americans want a price-and-distribution holiday for seven years for the fertilizer industry; the holiday is announced. The Bank and the Americans want the annulment of industrial licensing provisions for fifteen and odd strategic industries; the provisions are annulled. The Bank and the Ame-

ricans want devaluation of the rupee; the rupee is devalued. The Bank and the Americans want further liberalisation of imports for the light consumer industries; orders were issued liberalising imports for these industries. The Bank and the Americans want the Fourth Plan to be based on a "realistic assessment of resources"; the Finance Minister promises in Parliament that the Plan will be based on a realistic assessment of resources. The Bank and the Americans want the majority share of new fertilizer plants to vest with foreigners; the Union Government has apparently agreed to concede to the foreigners the prerogative of a controlling majority in the new fertilizer plants.

The re-colonisation of the Indian economy is almost complete. There are however only two minor points, but which ought not to worry us, since our rulers know best. Despite the generous scale of our surrender, the total aid coming in this year will be barely two-thirds of what it was last year. Also, the per capita income in the current year is seven per cent less than last year's level.

Peace With Neighbours

It is doubtful if the present Government will pay much heed to President Radhakrishnan's call for efforts "to achieve good neighbourly relations with Pakistan and China". With the approaching elections in view, the Congress Government has predictably revived the theme of a grave and immediate threat to India's security posed in concert by these two countries. The suggestion that India might take the initiative in concluding a no-war pact with China has been summarily turned down; nor is there any indication that the Government is even giving any thought to ways of reaching some kind of a negotiated settlement. The Government says that the Chinese are not interested in a settlement and hence there is no point in wasting time in a search for Sino-Indian understanding. Since New Delhi says so, this must be the truth, the whole truth, absolute and unchangeable, and any suggestion for peace with China is regarded as unrealistic, if not branded as anti-national.

Thanks perhaps to Anglo-American interest in the matter, pleas for good neighbourly relations with Pa-

Indian are not quite so suspect. At least, New Delhi does not dare to treat these suggestions, so long as they are couched in general terms, quite so contemptuously as it does similar suggestions in relation to China. But the theme of Sino-Pakistani collusion becomes a convenient excuse for keeping up tension over Pakistan as well. So long as Rawalpindi remains in Peking's evil clutches, so the argument goes, it will be idle to expect it to behave peaceably, and since Pakistan and China seem to be coming closer to each other India can only expect the two to remain implacably hostile to her, both individually and jointly.

Neither country, in fact, seems embarrassed with an excess of friendliness towards India. But does India seem over-eager for friendship? Neither about China nor about Pakistan is India's striving for friendly relations accepted by the world as altogether exemplary. Admittedly other countries are not necessarily fair; some are prejudiced against India for other reasons, some are partial towards China and, more often, towards Pakistan in their own interests. But surely not all the disappointment with India expressed abroad springs from thwarted self-interest, not all the criticism is associated with some sinister motivation.

Leave aside what others think or say. Are we sure in our own minds that we have done all we could to establish friendly relations with all our neighbours, especially with the two that are the most important? It may well be true that they have done less, but they apparently do not think so. There is obviously a colossal amount of misunderstanding, all of which may not be on the other side. Even if China and Pakistan misunderstand us more than we do them, there is nothing to prevent us from renewing and intensifying our efforts to remove the dangerous accretion of misunderstanding and suspicion. What prevents New Delhi from making a straightforward approach to China for a full and honest discussion on all disputed matters? What prevents it from agreeing to similar discussion with Pakistan, including talks on the Kashmir issue? Neither should offend its self-respect, which in any case is already devalued beyond measure. What stands in the way is that we do not quite see the importance of being able to live in

peace with our neighbours. When any of them gives us trouble, we can always complain to Washington, London and Moscow. Not that Pakistan acts differently, but Mr Bhutto, whatever may be his other faults, has at least reminded his countrymen that their future lies in Asia. It is a long time since we last heard about India's Asian identity, except from American spokesmen who would like to see India included in an Asian counterpoise to China.

Settlement of international disputes is never an easy task; it is much more difficult when the issues, as in the case of India's disputes with Pakistan and China, have been allowed to generate so much prejudice and passion. It can be attempted only by a Government which recognizes that it is more important to work for the nation's peace than to keep up international disputes for its internal political survival. The disputes with China and Pakistan give the Congress Government an excuse for stifling dissentient opinion, for organized efforts to discredit other political parties which would like to see normal relations established with these countries. The result is that even ordinary people, with no political axes to grind, who are unhappy over India's failure to settle her disputes with her neighbours are afraid of saying so for fear of being accused of anti-national bias. The President's call for good neighbourly relations may have little influence on the Government's policies, but it should at least give some strength to the muted voices of dissent.

Failure Of Proxy

Recent events in Kohima tragically highlight the futility of the Government of India's attempt to rule a people, who are at best uncooperative, by proxy. The ruling Naga National Organisation has never had any pretensions to being a political party; lacking a cohesive ideology, it was bound together only by individual interests that were, in the nature of events, destined to clash sooner or later. Friends of Nagaland had hoped however that the clash would occur over a less ignominious reason: it is reported that disaffection came out into the open only when a reallocation of jobs and portfolios last month seemed to benefit the Aos at the expense of the Semas,

Angamis and other already disgruntled tribes. Inter-tribal rivalry has existed all along in both the State and "Federal" governments, but the rag bag of the Naga National Organisation would probably have managed to pull along somehow so long as individual fortunes were not threatened.

It may not be without significance that one of the prime movers in the no-confidence motion against the former Chief Minister, Mr P. Shilu Ao, was the Finance Minister, Mr Hokishe Sema, who had just been deprived of his additional portfolio as Minister for P.W.D. Affairs; in a State where, defence apart, the main expenditure in the budget is the construction of roads and bridges, the P.W.D. is bound to be jealously guarded as a prize plum. Nor must it be forgotten that Mr Hokishe Sema's father was brutally massacred by the hostiles. A tradition of head-hunting and blood feuds makes, for long memories in Nagaland, and the motivation in politics can often be traced back to a sense of personal grievance. This might explain the timing of the Ministerial crisis; there are many in Kohima who have viewed with growing alarm the Prime Minister's cordial and continuing talks with the "Federal Government of Nagaland"; indeed, Mr Shilu Ao has often been blamed for not allowing a full-scale offensive to be mounted against the underground. But now that he has suffered defeat, it must be remembered to his credit that he has prevented overzealous colleagues like the Minister for Forests, Mr Jasokie Angami, another important figure in the crisis, from plunging the State into civil war.

With Mr Shilu Ao out of the way, the responsibility for ensuring that this does not, in fact, happen rests fairly and squarely on the Centre. It is early yet to prophesy what the attitude of the new Chief Minister, Mr T. N. Angami, will be, but the forces that brought him into power are themselves suspect. Besides, Mr Angami was once underground himself and the danger exists of his hating it with all the passion of an ex-lover. The desperate need in Nagaland today is to prevent any outbreak of such hatreds; the situation must be frozen until the next round of talks with the Prime Minister possibly paves the way to democratic elections in which all the 400,000 people of the State can with

confidence participate. No administration of nominees masquerading as elected leaders can foster such an atmosphere. The alternative of Central rule is to be everywhere deplored as a negation of that very parliamentary democracy to which we so loudly pretend, but in Nagaland it will probably be more acceptable than government by a small clique with no roots among the people. The N.N.O. has never enjoyed popular support and only the presence of the Army and the backing of the Government of India has maintained it in power; New Delhi should think again before it decides to continue that support.

Autumn Sequel

August has not been designated the cruellest month. Perhaps it is not, even in India which is a country so vast as to make it possible for snow and sand at the same time to co-exist in different parts of the land. August yet breeds

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain

What are the roots that clutch, what
branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know
only

A heap of broken images . . .

And the broken images include a very odd assortment of events. On August 7, 1941, Tagore died, but not before recording his agony over Africa and a sad disillusionment over Western civilization as a whole, although in the future of man he did not lose faith even then.

If Tagore died this month twenty-five years ago, it is pertinent to wonder whether his supreme prayer, stated in the two lines below, which we will not try to translate, was answered:

Jena āmar gāner seshe
Thānte pāri samē esē . . .

Life is rarely a musical composition; but if anyone's long life came nearest to a well-rounded lyric of sustained beauty it was surely Tagore's. Never did he cease to strive; the innate genius was big and great enough; the effort he put into its flowering is not so often remembered even by some of his most ardent admirers. Even the most inspired or spontaneous poetry is not all heart-work; for getting closer to perfection there must be

plenty of what Shaw has called head-work. Tagore put in both in abundance; to these he added a prodigious amount of sheer physical labour.

It would be absurd to suggest that Bengali literature has produced little or nothing of merit since Tagore—as absurd as the statement made once that all Bengali poetry after Michael Madhusudan Dutt was "derivative". To leave out the living, the late Sudhin Datta and Jibananda Das certainly brought new cadences to the Bengali muse, as did, in their own ways, Mohitlal Mazumdar and Jatindramohan Sengupta. Some short stories have been written in Bengali which would compare favourably with efforts of any other country or period. At least in terms of quantity, the Bengali novel has in recent years acquired new dimensions. What is undeniable is that Bengali life has since Tagore been fragmented; and this fragmentation is pathetically reflected in current literary efforts in Bengal. It will not do to argue that, when life itself is fragmented, literature is only true to life in reflecting the fact. The process of fragmentation started when Tagore was around; to the partition of 1905 his reaction was more vigorous than that of any of his successors in 1947. Tagore's reaction was not only vigorous and ultra-literary but also creative in every sense of that term. We wish we could discern anything like that in the present. Even in the most fragmented and rotten society it is possible to bring to life an integrated approach. Not many writers have shown it since Tagore.

The failure, and it is no less, is not wholly or even mainly literary. The failure is at once deeper and wider. The outward phenomena are familiar enough: provincial autonomy, worsening communal relations leading to the beastly massacre in 1946 taking us on to partition a year later; the insensitivity and callousness brought by World War II; the post-war Americanization, which has been mostly vulgarization throughout the world; the steady escalation of Hindi aggressiveness at the expense of English and the regional languages; the new social and political schisms; the pervasive air of ostentatious corruption—the list could be lengthened almost indefinitely. All these very real afflictions may not, however, add up to an explanation of the present state of Bengal's mind and body.

There has been a failure within a failure collective because it was a failure personal and individual with most of us. Would it be too moribund to suggest that, at some point difficult to specify, there was a failure of character?

In his eighty years Tagore saw a world and this country change, usually not for the better. If he had lived another twenty-five years he would have seen many more changes, at a vastly accelerated speed; whether he would have called it all progress seems more than doubtful. Tagore changed with the changing scene: it can even be argued that, on occasion, he changed too fast and too soon, to the detriment of the essential quality of his personality. There are times when one must just repudiate. Tagore's renunciation of his knighthood in 1919 was a symbolic gesture; a mighty protest it still was. His letter to Miss Eleanor Rathbone must still be remembered, like his correspondence with Yone Noguchi when Japan was raping China. How would he have reacted today to a Bhadratna? Or, to Vietnam? We can more than guess. But all things considered, it seems to us that Tagore timed his death rather well. He finished his song and did stop at "sam". We who should have been carrying a cross today carry only the corpse of a culture.

A Semantic Diversion

Mr Subramaniam has made it clear that he has no intention to resign. Parliament will hear more about him, perhaps also from him, but such chastening effect as all this may have on him will be limited and transient. He knows that he belongs to the ruling coterie in the present Government, to the small but powerful group which has already succeeded in identifying the country's economic policies with capitalist interests at home and abroad. Indeed he is the focus of Washington's hope in India, a pragmatic go-getter untrammelled by socialistic trappings. If he was useful in devaluing the rupee, he is also indispensable in running the devalued Government.

This has ceased to be surprising. What surprised Mr Subramaniam was some comment or other made by the Public Accounts Committee. When some MPs disapproved of his expression of surprise, he said what he

The Day Of Repentance

15th August

NIRAD C. CHAUDHURI

man was that he had been taken unawares. On the meaning of surprise there was a further exchange between Mr Chagla and Mr Bhupesh Gupta last Friday. Mr Subramaniam and his friends could have quoted good authority in support of their semantic argument. They could, for example, have recalled the famous remark of the lexicographer who was caught by his wife in the act of kissing the housemaid. When the wife exclaimed that she was surprised, the married man corrected her by saying: "No, my dear. You are astonished. It is I who am surprised."

If Mr Subramaniam meant that he had been caught unprepared, he was entirely correct in saying that he was surprised. But surprise in this sense usually has an element of embarrassment at the exposure of one's weakness or guilt. Did Mr Subramaniam also want to convey his embarrassment at unexpected exposure? If he did, he has got over that awkward state astonishingly quickly. But politicians in this country are seldom embarrassed even when caught in the act of committing the grossest impropriety, let alone being discomfited by subsequent exposure. Probably Mr Subramaniam meant no more than that he was astonished, shocked, or scandalized; whatever the jurist might think, the use of "surprise" in these senses is now sanctioned by usage. So far as the public is concerned, however, there is hardly any element of surprise in any part of the proceedings. The public has come to expect the kind of doings disclosed in the PAC reports; its emotions are no longer those excited by the unexpected. But what is expected can also generate anger; it is not surprising that people all over the country are becoming increasingly angry.

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AUGUST 19, 1966

WHEN Aurangzeb added a barbican in front of the Lahore Gate of the Red Fort of Delhi, the imprisoned Shah Jahan wrote to him: "You have put a veil before the face of my bride." The same barbican has now become the platform for the bla-bla that is uttered on the 15th August by the Prime Minister of India for the time being, which means that it is still the structure from which a figurative veil is sought to be thrown before the face of every reality in India.

Since 1947 we have been treated to a good many of these tunes in baritone and tenor, the contralto will come this year. I am writing in advance of the performance, but I do not expect to be proved wrong by it. The reader will be able to judge; I only set down my anticipation with confidence: we shall have the same triviality accompanying the same, but no, a growing tragedy. A day which ought to be a day of repentance will be treated as if it was a day of mafficking.

But before I deal with the situation in India I should like to give an indication of the world background of my mood. I wonder how many people in India have read *Disenchantment* by C. E. Montague (son-in-law of C. P. Scott, the famous editor of the *Manchester Guardian*). It was a beautiful, though bitter, expression of disillusionment that had come over most of the young men who had joined Kitchener's New Army in 1915, and, instead of perishing on the Somme, had come through even Passchendaele, to live for the rest of their existence in a world which seemed to be as grey and deep a morass as that ghastly battlefield. The book was my favourite reading for many years from 1924.

The interval of twenty years between the two World Wars was a period of pessimistic brooding for those who had the capacity to see through things and be chastened by the exposure, and a period of frivolity for those who suffered but wanted to forget their un-understood pain.

Even at the commencement of the era, the brooding had become prophetic. I still remember how impressed I was by it. Dean Inge, whom the complacent wing of English society called the Gloomy Dean (ten times more gloom would have been justified), said in his *Romanes Lecture, The Idea of Progress*, delivered in 1920: "Ancient civilizations were destroyed by imported barbarians, we manufacture our own."

Certainly, Dean Inge's country has done so. The United States has done so, and so have most Western countries. My youngest son, who has just come back from England, told us that a majority of the youth of that country were just Yahoos, and it was even difficult to make out which were male and which female. A young Bengali girl I know and who is studying in Leningrad, has written that the Russians give her an impression of being uncultured. Of course, this is a brand of barbarism which is wholly different from the Yahooism of Britain and the United States.

Even before the Second World War H. G. Wells, an optimist if there was one and the most energetic preacher of the brave new world that was to come out of science, had lost all his faith. The Second World War did not improve matters. It did not indeed begin with the kind of enthusiasm which seems to go halfway to meet disillusionment, but it ended in an event which justified the worst forebodings, namely, the employment of the atom bomb.

Russell's Pessimism

In 1955 I was one day talking with Bertrand Russell, and I heard him giving expression to unqualified pessimism about the prospects of mankind. While sharing his view so far as the existing situation went, I tried to balance it by setting forth the grounds for optimism regarding the final outcome. He listened to me with patience and observed: "Perhaps what you say will happen in five hundred or a thousand years, but I shall not be living then."

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indeed, it is impossible for anyone who has sensibility, any faculty of feeling and thinking, not to live in a broken dejection through our times, and even to feel that one was in a secure chamber. This mood can be kept at bay only by engaging in a continuous round of distractions like going to see the films and attending social parties. To be alone is to be frightened out of one's wits, and for perfectly valid reasons.

Look only at the antics of the strongest and the strongest of the countries of the world, which is also the most progressive in the historical sense—the United States. One day I had an American diplomat that much as I admired America there were two things coming from it, the very things which affected the outside world most, which were utterly alien. These were, of course, American policy and the American national projection. Soviet policy and projection were angelic in comparison.

American foreign policy is determined to create two things in any part of the world in which it is interested: either wars which in their combined ferocity and ferocity can be compared only to the Thirty Years' War, which laid Germany in ruins; or pro-American native regimes which are corrupt and exploitive, and so wholly unrepresentative. As regards cultural projection, I have only to point to the state of affairs in India. It gives me pain to say that there is not one non-traditional vice or perversion that is to be seen amongst us today which has not come from the United States. Even the monkeys or pop-culture of British provenance who came to India recently are only feeble imitations of the gorillas of American pop-culture.

Up till ten years ago I cherished the hope that civilization might still win the battle against barbarism in Great Britain, and I symbolized the character of the battle by quoting a line of the music of Schumann about the march of the Davidsbündler against the Philistines in my book on England. An English critic quarrelled with this and said that my book should have closed with a dying fall, and not a fanfare. The critic seems to have been right; this is what I feel today.

After independence the Indian intelligentsia, with their abject servility to the West, were bound to take over, along with the industrial tech-

niques, a good deal of this barbarism and decadence of the contemporary West in a readymade form. In fact, they are doing so on a grand scale. But their own contribution to our present sorry state of affairs is actually greater. If the Hudson is washing itself into the Ganges, it is in itself a very turbid Ganges. I felt the existence of this corruption in Calcutta all through the thirties. I have written in a previous article of mine in *Now* that by 1934 I had lost all faith in the capacity of the Indian middle class to build up a new country. This conviction of their incapacity went on growing until I felt that independence would really be a setback to a civilized existence for us, and that we should lose it either to the United States singly or to a combination of the United States and the British Commonwealth. That conclusion was set down in print in my autobiography, and was written down as early as January, 1948.

What brought me to this was my experience of the Calcutta Corporation from 1934 onwards. From 1937 I had a greater opportunity for watching its work at close quarters as private secretary to Mr Sarat Chandra Bose, then leader of the Congress Party. Up to the end of 1941, when Mr Bose was placed under detention, I was in a manner of speaking in the dirty kitchen where the hors d'oeuvres of Indian independence were being made with very much adulterated ingredients. That gave me in advance an acute indigestion for the main meal.

It must be kept in mind that the municipal act sponsored by Surendranath Banerji made the Calcutta Corporation the first Indian public body of the highest status to be completely Indianized. Its working under the new dispensation was bound to be a dress rehearsal of what Indians could and would do with power in the public sphere, political or civic. In point of fact, during the first few months it did seem as if an improved civic existence was coming. But C. R. Das, who was the first Mayor of the new Corporation, died, and Subhas Chandra Bose, who was the first Chief Executive Officer, was placed under detention. Then what was bound to happen happened.

The old Calcutta gentry who, after the British community, were the privileged order of the city, at once joined the Congress (knowing which side

of the toast was buttered), and, of course, they swamped whatever idealism there was in the civic programme. It became a means of aggrandizing these people, and the whole Corporation a close preserve for them. I observed all this from 1934 to 1936 when I officiated off and on as editor of *The Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, and from 1937 to 1941 as Mr Bose's secretary, as I have already said. What I saw dismayed me utterly, for I was not such a sceptic about my countrymen as I am now. After that experience, however, I was never to look at the prospect of Indian independence with the same eyes as I did from 1905 onwards. What I saw was an appalling indifference to the public interest and an unscrupulous determination to advance private gain at the expense of everything else. The scales fell from my eyes.

Two Stories

I cannot relate all my experiences here, but I shall select a few just to illustrate the spirit in which the average Indian public man went about his business. Here are two stories about the treatment of the permanent staff. The Councillors used to have periodic heartsearchings about the rules of service of the Corporation's employees in the name of efficiency, but really to bring in more carcasses for the vultures that they were. In the late thirties such a revision was again proposed, and I was asked to draft the rules by Mr Bose. The initiative had come from Dr B. C. Roy, who was anxious to increase the efficiency of the staff by giving them a better deal.

I thought that a better deal called for at least one safeguard for the employees. I had never seen a Departmental candidate promoted to a higher post. Young and inexperienced outsiders related to the Councillors were always brought in at their expense. So I put in a clause that, provided the qualifications were equal, a Departmental candidate would get preference as a matter of course. The Congress Municipal Association was to discuss the draft in the evening, at which the formidable Dr Roy was to be present. So, in the morning some Councillors of the scavenging jackal type dropped in to have an advance look at the rules, so that they might not be caught on the wrong foot. They went attentively through the draft, and at one

place one of them cried out in a horrified tone:

Councillor: What is this, sir?

S.C.B.: What is what?

C.: This rule about preference of Departmental candidates.

S.C.B.: That is as it should be. Else they would not work.

C.: But that also means that our relatives and friends will not get jobs, for there will always be qualified Departmental candidates. You will have to take that out, sir.

—And taken out it was. A bit of a farce followed this squalid tragedy for the clerks. They went on to discuss which posts were to be kept open for direct filling up by outsiders. These, on principle, were the highest ones like that of the Chief Engineer or Chief Medical Officer, in which mere seniority or Departmental experience might not be enough. But the Councillors went on suggesting post after post, even very junior ones.

"What is this?" cried out Mr Bose, "there should be some principle. We cannot have any and every post reserved in this way."

One Councillor explained why a particular post was to be so reserved:

C: কাঁচা মাল, স্তর! কাঁচা মাল!
(Ready cash, sir! Ready cash!)

What he meant was that the post was likely to fall vacant shortly, and so it had to be kept in hand for jobbery. Thus nearly all the places likely to fall vacant in the next six months were reserved or kept open for outsiders.

In the evening Dr Roy looked through the list and blew up. "What is this?" he cried in rage, "you had better put a ban on all promotions." He snatched up a red pencil and began to score through the list. I was standing by him, and saw the massacre. The Councillors understood enough from the manipulation of the pencil, and looked on with livid fury. One cheeky beggar, bolder than the rest, shouted from the other end of the table:

C: জানি, জানি, স্তর! কার জগ্নে ডিপার্ট-
মেন্টেল ক্যান্ডিডেটের ওপর এত টান!
(I know very well for whose sake all this sympathy for the Departmental candidate is being shown).
The whole question of Depart-

mental vs. Outside candidates had come to a head over the post of the Superintendent of Sir Stuart Hogg Market, one of the most lucrative ones for its perquisites, which had fallen vacant. Dr Roy was in favour of giving it to the Superintendent of Cornwallis Street Market. He was not the man to be browbeaten by a little Calcutta Kayastha, and so he cried out employing his characteristic *tutoiment*:

B.C.R: দেখ, অমুক, বেশী কথা কয়োন।
আমিও তোমাদের কথা কিছু জানি।

(Look here, so and so, don't talk too much. I also know something about your goings-on.)

So, some posts were in the end kept for Departmental candidates.

More Stories

Here is a rather blackguardly instance of jobbery. Mr Bose had recommended for the post of an electrical engineer on Rs. 200 a month a young man who had not only been in the C.E.S.C. but also employed outside India on a high salary, but who had been arrested in 1932 and been a detenu. So he was not getting any good employment and was looking forward to getting this post. It should be kept in mind that posts up to Rs. 200 were filled up by the Chief Executive Officer, and not the Services Committee.

After the usual abnormal delays whenever appointments were the stake, the young man came one day to me and said that the Chief Engineer had recommended his appointment, and the file was going to the Chief Executive Officer the next day. He came again the next afternoon, and told me that he had lost. And this was his account of the last round.

The clerk in charge of the file was going along the corridor before the Councillor's room to the Chief's room, and our candidate was following at a short distance. They saw a Councillor standing at one of the doors, with a man who pointed at the clerk. As the latter came abreast, the Councillor said:

C. Hallo, where are you going?
Clerk. To the Chief, Sir, with a file.

C. Give me that file.

Clerk. How can I, Sir? The Chief Engineer has asked me to take it to the Chief, and for me to part with it....

C. —চাকরীর ব্যাপার রাখো? (Do you care for your job?)

Clerk. স্তর, আপনারা মালিক! (Sir, you are the master.)

C. Then give it to me.

He took it, and got the Chief Executive Officer to appoint his protégé. "Highway robbery!" was my helpless comment.

Now comes a funny incident. One day the Councillors were discussing the fairs being made by Mahatma Gandhi about bogus membership of the Congress and false electoral rolls, etc. One fellow observed cynically, "What is there in all this to complain about? We all have bogus electors for ourselves. At least ten per cent of the electors are fakes, and we could not get in without them."

This made them all anxious to have a nominee as a clerk in the Election Department of the Calcutta Corporation to put in false names. The Department was under the Bengal Government, but the Chief Executive Officer was the head, though only as the agent of the Government. This was his whip hand against the Councillors. They had to cringe to him to get their nominees appointed. I saw the spectacle one day.

I had gone with a letter from Mr Bose to the Executive Officer. He very courteously asked me to take

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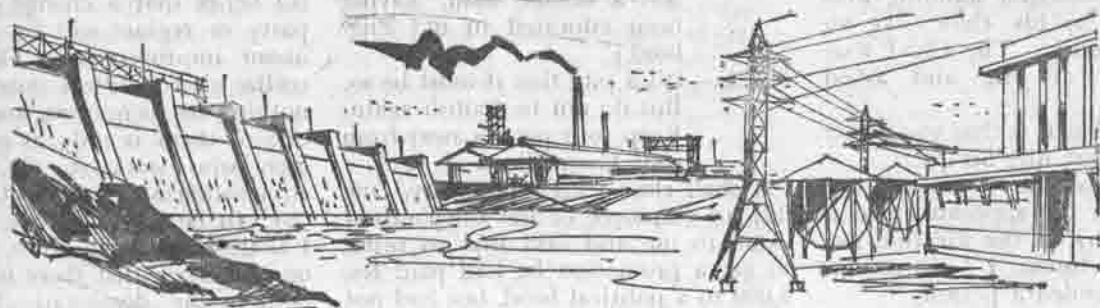
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The capacity of these three steel plants is being doubled to 6 million tonnes and preliminaries for the expansion in the Fourth Five Year Plan to 9 million tonnes—out of the 16 million tonnes national target—are being completed.

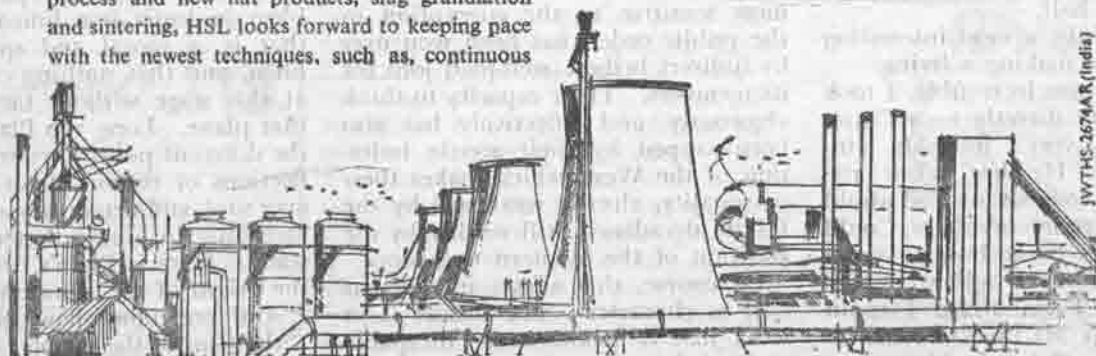
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chair. I did, but I was surprised to see a young Councillor standing with folded hands by his chair like an accused in a dock. The Chief Executive looked at him and asked gruffly:

C.E. What is it that you want? Councillor. That file, Sir!

C.E. What file?

Councillor. For the appointment of a clerk in the Election Department. I have recommended a person.

The Councillor took out the file, and placed the application before the Executive Chief. He looked at it, and signed it nonchalantly. I just detected a shrug of the shoulders. Curious masters of the Chief Executive Officer!—I thought as a spectator.

Farce

It was farce unlimited, provided no emotion about the country interfered with an objective contemplation of the experiences. One day a Muslim gentleman I knew well but whom I had not seen for a long time, came to see me at 1, Woodburn Park. "Brother Nirad!" he said—that was how he used to address me, "Do you know that my father is dead, and now I have to do something for a living?" Then the following conversation took place:

N.C.C.—I have heard about it. What are you doing?

M.G.—Do you know what 'assessment' is?

N.C.C.—I think I do.

M.G.—I live by getting it reduced. I know a few Councillors, [he was in politics before] and the houseowners come to me. I get things done for them, and they give me 10%. I give half of it to the Councillors concerned, and can make shift to live on the other half.

N.C.C.—Certainly, a most interesting way of making a living.

M.G.—But I am in trouble. I took a party directly to a Councillor—very foolishly indeed! He has taken the whole commission and would not give me my share. Could you get Sarat Bose to say a word to the fellow?

N.C.C.—Oh! I am afraid I could not ask Mr Bose to come in to an affair of this sort.

M.G.—You think so? Then I

would not bother you. [He was a decent man, having been educated in old England.]

N.C.C.—It's a pity that it must be so. But do not be foolish again. Keep your parties away from your Councillors.

I shall close with a last story. One day an employee of the Corporation came to me and said that in order to get a promotion he had paid Rs. 3,000 to a political fund, but had not secured it. He wanted his money back, and had got nowhere in his efforts. Could I do anything with Mr Bose? He horrified me by saying that the money had been borrowed by mortgaging his wife's ornaments.

When I went home I found his wife with mine. The poor woman showed her bare arms and neck, and cried, "We have lost everything," she said, "Could not your husband do something? Please ask him." I did what I could, but, of course, it came to nothing.

These are only a few of the highlights of the picture I saw from day to day in my contacts with the Calcutta Corporation. The cumulative effect of the experience was shattering. It made me feel that there was something in the Christian assumption that man's nature was inherently evil. I realized that if the government of the country came into the hands of Indians, India as a whole would become a Calcutta Corporation writ large. This is what it has become. The microcosm has blown itself into a macrocosm.

What makes the general public incapable of revolting against it even when they are sickened by the spectacle, is their own enfeeblement. They are feeble in different ways. The upper middle class, which from its education could be expected to be most sensitive to the corruption in the public order, has been won over by indirect bribes—well-paid jobs for its members. Their capacity to think vigorously and effectively has also been sapped by their servile imitation of the West, which makes their personality, already weakened by the Hindu decadence, still weaker by the addition of the Western decadence.

Of course, this affects intellect as well as character. The former is so weak that it has become incapable even of detecting the malady, not to speak of finding a remedy. Wherever

one goes one comes across only a pitiful belief that a change of political party or regime will by itself bring about improvement. They do not realize that political systems can do nothing by themselves, and that each one of them is only as good as the men who work it. So, in certain circumstances, even absolute monarchy can be better than a democracy. I shall give one instance. Will anyone maintain that there is more freedom in the democratic West today than there was in the Roman Empire under the Antonines? Marcus Aurelius wrote that from Severus he had learnt "to conceive the idea of a commonwealth based on equity and freedom of speech, and of a monarchy cherishing above all the liberty of the subject." This freedom, the United States, which is talking itself hoarse about freedom, does not give even to its own citizens. For some of them it is nothing better than a police State.

The other social orders are so demoralized by their wants, disappointments, and their sufferings that they have no strength left even to believe in the possibility of amelioration. In this state of benumbed pain they are further anaesthetized by the organized *tamasha* that is provided partly by the Government and mostly by the profit-seeking concerns of mass entertainment which take their methods and models from the decadent democratic West. These act as sedatives and distractions, but are not effectual even as such. There come moments when the people feel their condition as unendurable, and then they break out in demonstrations, *bundhs*, and the like. But these only destroy the authority of the State without bringing about any improvement.

A Human Problem

In the ultimate analysis, it has to be realized that the political problem in India is a human problem—that is, a moral and spiritual problem, and that nothing can be done at this stage without tackling it on that plane. Long ago Plato said that the different political systems were reflections of certain states of the human soul, and democracy and tyranny, according to him, reflected the worst states. Here is Plato's description of the origin of the democratic man:

"And remember how we described the man of the people. His origin, if you recollect, lay in an early training under a parsimonious

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quity, who honoured only the money-making desires, and slighted those that are unnecessary and that would not exist but for purposes of amusement and display. Is that right?"

The man Socrates was speaking to was answered with a 'Yes.' There should be a more emphatic 'Yes', if that is put forward as an explanation of the existence of the set of young democ-
ratic landlarks amongst us. Such a state of affairs, added Plato, was fol-
lowed by tyranny. Curiously enough, a little today democracy and tyranny exist. This can be ended, not by political changes, but by a moral re-
generation.

Let

No great political thinker of the world has ever said that political life can be separated from the moral. Think of all of them—Plato, Cicero, Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, Rousseau, Burke, or Mill. The pure moral political thinkers are either ideal system-makers, or practical coun-
sellors. But Marx is not one of the moral ones. Only, his solution was moral, whereas his inspiration was mainly moral. It was his anger against the injustice of capitalism which led him to seek a remedy whose efficacy would not depend on the wit and efforts of man alone, but be guaranteed by a course of his-
torical evolution which he formulated as inevitable. To him morality and the evolution were identical. And therefore it is not surprising that his scheme was less of an intellectual device than a kind of religious faith, which in its old and current form is denounced.

In contemporary India, however, a inevitable revolution—admitting it is inevitable—might not come at all before the government of the country by the Congress has reduced

the people to a state of abject degradation and barbarism, out of which no historical development will drag them out. So, a more short-term and more directly moral programme would be desirable. Somehow, that sort of approach is more in harmony with the temperament of the Indian people, who are naturally didactic. Mahatma Gandhi understood that very well, or rather he did not under-
stand anything, but being a basic Hindu acted on natural Hindu in-
spirations. By so doing he was able to bring together Indian nationalism and morality. Something on the same lines has to be done for Indian politics, which should never be treated as mere politics.

There is a very striking instance from European history of this kind of impact on political anarchy and political life of a moral and religious movement. It was furnished by the Cluniac movement of the Middle Ages. After the decay of the Caro-
lingian Empire there was anarchy all over Western Europe. The rich and the powerful robbed the poor and the weak. An ecclesiastical council held in 909 A.D. described the state of affairs in the following words:

"The cities are depopulated, the monasteries ruined and burned, the land is reduced to a solitude. As the first men lived without law or constraint, abandoned to their pas-
sions, so now every man does what it pleases him, despising the laws of God and man and the ordinances of the Church. The powerful op-
press the weak, the land is full of violence against the poor and the plunder of the goods of the Church. Men devour one another like the fishes in the sea."

The reform of this state of affairs did not come from the political field, but the religious. It was from the monastic movement initiated from Cluny that a moral and social re-
generation began. The great Abbot St Odo of Cluny did not confine his preaching to religious matters. The most striking feature of his teaching was its bold and almost revolution-
ary criticism of social injustice. The great evil of the age in his eyes was the oppression of the poor by the ruling class of those days. As he said:

"How then are these robbers Chris-
tians or what do they deserve who slay their brothers for whom they

are commanded to lay down their lives?"

"You have only to study the books of antiquity to see that the most powerful are always the worst. Worldly nobility is due not to nature but to pride and ambition. If we judged by realities we should give honour not to the rich for the fine clothes they wear but to the poor who are the makers of such things—For the banquets of the powerful are cooked in the sweat of the poor."

This kind of preaching is certainly more in harmony with the spirit of the Indian people than the so-called secular chatter of the present ruling class. From this point of view, there-
fore, one might say that Mr Jaya-
prakash Narayan is a more typical Indian political leader than Nehru. Only, his personality is not strong enough, nor his sense of his mission sufficiently burning.

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O Blood! Blood! Blood!

(Othello, Act III, Scene 3, Line 455)

UTPAL DUTT

THERE was this nose-in-the-air bloke making a speech. His white khaddar cap bobbed merrily as he went on and on, presumably because he was in love with his own voice—nobody in the house seemed to listen anyway. Nobody except Candide that is, because Candide was hanging on the blighter's lips as if they were Mlle Chantier's legs in the Folies Bergère.

The bloke said—believe it or not—that India's struggle for freedom is unexampled in history, because it has been totally bloodless. Anaemia in revolutions, he said, was a special Indian quality. He seemed to say—in Hindi, if you please—that Indians are Indians only because they fought the English peacefully. Vice versa, peacefulness becomes real peacefulness only when it becomes Indian. Thus peacefulness is typically Indian. You know the way they talk, switching from A to B and from B to A, until you feel you know nothing at all, that you have always been a dwarf living under false pretences.

When it was all over finally, Candide sat glued to his seat in spite of my nudges. When the hall had cleared of the hundred and seventy-three white caps, Candide blinked and said, "That was educative."

"You're telling me," I said. "I feel I'm wearing nothing but my gym slip."

"That is natural," he said, "because all this education can't be good for health. If you consider all the possibilities, a teacher who does not know his lessons is normal in a school, but he can be rather dangerous when you are grown-up."

"Ye gods," I said, "Let's not explore possibilities. I couldn't care less. I'm not listening."

"Consider the proposition," Candide went on, "that India's struggle against English imperialism has always been bloodless. Apart from the eighteenth century rulers who fought and died, the nineteenth is replete with indecently bloody examples of Indians who let blood. There were the Kols who fought Col. Adam.

There was this zealot Titu Mir who was killed by McKinley."

"What the hell you are talking about?" I said.

"I'm only trying to tell you that our history-books do not agree," he said, very calmly. "Probably I am wrong. Your leader must be right. They always are. But then I am always open to correction by leaders. As I was saying—"

At this point a sudden clawing of the air by my hands failing to make any impression, he went on.

"As I was saying, there was this war in 1857, otherwise known as the Sepoy Mutiny, where a veritable mass of Indians appear to have lost their lives. It was rather silly of them, really, to mess up the history-books so. Then of course there were the Wahabis, Faraizis, Sanyasins, Fakirs and things who all died in this un-Indian way. Not counting Tipu Sultan of course, and the Sikhs at Chillianwallah."

The Last Straw

I had faded out. It was the last straw. The man went on shooting strange names. "The Gurkhas are probably not Indians, but the Assam war was rather bloody also. The Mahratta war appears to be also a study in bloodletting. The extermination of the Moplahs, Pindaris and sundry other peoples could not possibly have been police-action against mere criminals, could it, as the cunning English would have us believe."

"Are you sure you're not making it all up?" I said.

"Coming to the present century—" he said, and I felt literally submerged, if that's the word I want. I buckled.

"Coming to the present century," he said, "the men that the English called terrorists showed a very special and un-Indian aptitude for lying hither and thither in pools of blood. Some were hanged, of course, but they do not count, because they did not bleed. The Punjabis and the Bengalis appear to have run berserk at this stage of history and proved themselves unworthy of Indian tradi-

tions. Then in 1942 the peasants in many parts of India went particularly sanguinary, not to talk of workers who made a habit of being shot at by the police. In 1946 the sailors in Bombay and Karachi became utterly unreliable and in fiendish delight in sniping at British soldiery and in being sniped back."

I became vaguely conscious of certain grammatical bloomers in Candide's rigmarole, but before I could poof a syllable, he came in with, "The list is only partial. I have left a lot."

"I don't want to hear them," I said. But then patriotism is a backward emotion. It doesn't like being handed the raspberry. So I said, "these blighters," I said, "amount to nothing. Gandhi alone worth a million of them. So counts, they don't. And he's a peaceful, poor man."

"So he got shot too," said Candide. "Tragique, really. Just shows it doesn't it?"

I did not know what it was supposed to show. But Candide came with what I was terrified all along would come in with, "Gandhi is worth a million. Subhas Bose, I know. And his men lustily shot unnumbered Englishmen."

Now that was a dirty sleight of hand. The bastard was exploiting my chauvinism. He knows I am British.

Chinese?

"There are two possibilities, I know," he said. "Either that all the bloodthirsty people were not really Indians at all, but probably degraded Chinese—they are everywhere, I know. Or, that their blood is not blood at all, but red paint."

Now I was angry. I ask you. Really. He was not going to sit there and punch holes into my country. Frog-eater of all people.

"Listen, frenchie," I said, "I never say some people never died. We do say, the real revolution is bloodless, and that was typically Indian. No one else can even think of it. We invented it all by ourselves. How can you understand you with scalps of the aristocrats hanging out of your reticule? You Robespierre's descendants."

"We're always open to correction," he said. "But then possibilities are you know."

"They don't," I said. "Our men

tion is absolutely Indian. That's where we differ from the communies: these flag is a bloody bit of plagiarism, who can't even talk without something impossible Russian names."

"But then," said Candide, "where did you find your tricolour except France? I may be wrong you know, utterly ignorant. But as far as I know yours is an imitation of—improvement upon—Robespierre's moult."

This was news to me. "Are you trying to tell me," I said, "that satyagraha, non-co-operation and civil disobedience are also imitations? You have the check?"

"Far from it," he said. "I am only drawing your attention to the close similarities in history. Occidental,

no doubt. Non-co-operation was Parnell's weapon against Captain Boycott. Though this Parnell had the audacity to precede Gandhi by about sixty years, there is no doubt at all that he must have gone to school in India. And civil disobedience is a term invented, theorized and explained by an American plagiarist called Thoreau. No doubt he too must have picked it up from old Indian manuscript. And there is, of course, the greatest Indian of all, who taught the world satyagraha in a barbaric language. In Russian, I mean."

"Who?" I said. "Who the dickens are you telling about?"

"Leo Tolstoy," he said. "The Indian who spoke Russian."

Commentary

"Pak Military Build-Up"

OUTSIDER

THE detailed statement about the military re-equipment and re-organization of Pakistan which the Defence Minister of India made on August 8 makes very strange reading, particularly when taken with his previous statement on August 1.

Governments normally do not give such circumstantial and precise information about the armed forces of a foreign country, especially an unfriendly country. In fact, on August 1 Mr Chavan said that expressly. Here is the passage of his statement:

"Since a large number of questions have been asked by honourable members about the military build-up in Pakistan, I have considered it appropriate to make a brief general statement on this subject. As members will no doubt realize, I can only give broad indications. *It will not be in the public interest for me to discuss details.*" (Italics mine).

On August 9 the same reservation was made about giving information in respect of the missile sites stated to have been established in East Pakistan. Mr Chavan said:

"The Government was keeping a very close watch on Sino-Pak collusion in East Pakistan, but could not disclose whether Pakistan had missiles there."

All this is intelligible. What is not, is the frankness on the 8th. Why was it shown? This is a question which has to be answered, not with reference to any military situation, but the political. One part of Mr Chavan's statement was definitely political, and here it is:

"It is unfortunate that notwithstanding the agreement arrived at Tashkent, Pakistan, with the instigation and assistance of China, should be making these warlike preparations. This is going to be a long-term threat. We cannot, therefore, afford to relax in our defence efforts. I am confident that despite the strain which Pakistan's build-up will impose upon us the country will not shirk its responsibilities and will face any threat to its security coolly and calmly."

Any student of history will be able to hunt up many precedents for such a statement. I give one, which though not identical in diction is similar in spirit. The defiance ran as follows:

"When folk in other countries say that now they are arming and that they will continuously increase their armaments, then to these statesmen I have only one thing to say: 'Me you will never tire.' I am determined to continue to

march on this path, I am convinced that we shall advance faster than the others.... If anyone should really wish to pit his strength against ours with violence, then the German people is in the position to accept the challenge at any time: it is ready, too, and resolved...."

I will not disclose the name of the speaker, for if the reader is not able to identify him from the outburst itself, it is no use giving him a specific name.

Let me now come back to the original question—Why was the statement of the 8th made? The immediate background of politics should account for it.

Since the beginning of the session of Parliament, the Government has been facing one discomfiture after another. After the row of the first days, about which the Government spoke with screaming horror in the name of parliamentary manners, it had cold feet and yielded to the trouble-makers. It lost face in the Bhoothalingam affair. The no-confidence motion brought further discredit, for all that the Government could do was to talk back. Last of all, came the second report of the Public Accounts Committee with its strictures on the Food Minister.

Disturbed Situation

If the parliamentary situation was discouraging, nor was the situation in the country much better. From all over India came reports of discontent, strikes, and disturbances. I mention only the most important: arrest of Indulal Yagnik and others; disturbances at Dibrugarh; firing at Durgapur; Ahmedabad bandh; the Bihar bandh; calling out of the army at Jorhat. I am not giving the details of the fasts, demonstrations, and strikes.

As against all this, in the political sphere, the Government had nothing to show except counter-arguments. The initiative in the attacks was left entirely to the critics of the Government. In such situations military bluster always comes handy, and in this case it was a question of something which was on the mind of the Indian people. One might say plainly that the only field in which the Government has any initiative left to it today in respect of political argument, is the military. Here it enjoys

two advantages—first, exclusive information, and, next, the anxiety of the Indian people about Pakistan, which in its turn is the product of a negative militarism. Therefore, whenever the strictly political wing of the Government trembles and totters, the military wing can still redress the situation: which is rather like Murat giving the order "Tambours! La Charge!" on the 19th Brumaire, in a figurative manner.

It may be set down without any hesitation today that the only politi-

cal gesture left to the Government which is thoroughly discredited on the home front in everything is the military. But one more point must be made. The Government is assertive even in that field only when a good show can be put up, as in respect of conventional armaments, when it comes to things like missiles, it becomes discreet, as it did on the 9th. To have been frank about missiles would only have frightened the people without bringing any credit to the Government.

Calcutta Diary

J. MOHAN

THE dreaded lean period has started in West Bengal and harrowing tales of distress in the countryside are coming in. The continuing drought superimposed on the food shortage has made the lean period even leaner than usual. The procurement programme has flopped and nothing now stands between actual starvation and the peasantry except the thin trickle of PL480 wheat and the blackmarket rice.

The expected spurt in industrial activity following devaluation has failed to materialise. The State's largest industry, jute, is facing closures, lay-offs and retrenchment. The IJMA, whose bosses are believed to wield more power than State Ministers, have pleaded that stoppage of imports from Pakistan and shortfalls in local production have left them with no alternative. The engineering industry is facing a similar situation. The slashing down of orders by the Railways has led to a crisis in many of the companies which concentrated on manufacture of wagons and other supplies for the railways. A leading engineering concern in Calcutta has inserted a half-page advertisement which reads like an ultimatum to the Government. Despite devaluation our exports are not going up nor are they likely to unless, says the firm, all duties on imported raw materials are reduced, liberal imports are allowed and they are permitted to maintain large stocks of imported raw materials. All talk of concentration must be stopped and economies of scale must be given full play, and so on. These, it is stated,

are the realistic steps that have to be taken if the devaluation gamble is to succeed.

The crisis has already sparked off the first strike struggles, harbingers of the storm to come. Apart from Durgapur, there has been a bundh in Cooch Behar. College staff may go on hunger-strike and the cessation of work will continue till their demands are met. School teachers have expressed their dissatisfaction with the paltry increase in dearness allowance announced and have also threatened to go on strike. The agitation of Government employees is gradually moving to a denouement and the lead given by Uttar Pradesh might well be followed. In this situation it is not difficult to foresee what the coming months have in store.

As far as the political parties are concerned the Bangla Congress will launch a food movement but, true to its traditions, it is not thinking of anything more serious than a limited satyagraha if it becomes necessary. As far as the Left parties are concerned, it seems they are not too keen on a showdown and would like to limit their coming movement to protest demonstrations of various kinds. They are serious about the elections and would like to concentrate on them rather than go in for agitations because that might provide the Government with an opportunity to clamp them in jail and disrupt their preparations for the polls.

But, as happened during the earlier part of the year, the hands of the opposition parties might be forced despite themselves. A trigger-happy

police, a wooden-headed bureaucrat and irresponsible and panicky Ministers might yet set the spark to the powder keg. And then... then of course it is anybody's guess what will happen.

The latest brainwave of a high official in the West Bengal Agriculture Department is a scheme to grow winter vegetables in the Salt Lake reclamation area. Since this area will be unfit for building for a few more years, should it not be put to some use? Why not grow winter vegetables there and solve Calcutta's food problem? Some officers were summoned and asked to prepare a scheme. They went round the area, consulted experts and came back looking rather crestfallen. The land is unfit for cultivation and huge supplies of good earth and fertilizers would be needed before anything could be made to grow on it. This was the burden of their report. But our Stakhanovite high official was not to be daunted. To hell with those reports and the views of experts! He had decided that winter vegetables must be grown and he would go ahead with his plans. With some suppliers who have surplus stocks of fertilizers on their hands egging him on, he is going ahead with his scheme. Only a few years ago there was a scandal in the department when a few thousand rupees were spent to grow a few seers of brinjals. A repetition of the earlier fiasco is clearly on the cards. But what does that matter? A conscientious officer will have shown that he did his bit to save his country from starvation and if in the bargain some surplus stocks of fertilizers are disposed of at Government expense the public should not grumble.

It is difficult to appreciate the hulabaloo in the Corporation over a text-book for schools which contains the words "Sach Mat Kaho" (Do tell the truth). What about the statement made by our leaders in Parliament on devaluation? Even an hour before the actual announcement of the decision they had vehemently denied that devaluation was about to take place even though they had known that the decision had been taken. Children who are old enough to read the newspapers or to listen to the radio must have wondered how one set of moral standards existed

political leaders and a totally different set for children.

The makers of the "Sach mat" text-book should be singled out for a suitable award. Here at least are publishers who wish to train children from the very beginning in the realities that they will face instead of helping in the conspiracy to keep children in a make-believe world until one day disillusionment comes to them with a cruel bang.

Prices And Labour Unrest

CRITIC

A strong wave of labour unrest is beginning to sweep Eastern India. There are clear signs that it may spread to the rest of the country within the next few months. Even before devaluation, the soaring prices of essential commodities presaged a situation in which social turbulence could not be prevented except by checking the price line. There have been no serious attempts to check it because the two factors behind rising prices—under-production and deficit-financing—have been left untouched.

The crisis brought about by under-production of foodgrains is more acute in Eastern India because of the comparatively high population pressures, increasing unemployment and lack of hope for any betterment within the present scope of Government's economic activities. Political forms of labour unrest are a result rather than a cause of economic demands. This would become clearer if we look at some figures.

In West Bengal where there is some sort of rationing in major industrial areas, the price index of food articles has increased from 162.8 on July 9, 1965 to 192.8 on July 2, 1966 taking 1953 prices as the base. (Source: *West Bengal Weekly* published by the Public Relations Department of the West Bengal Government). This 30 per cent increase in the index means a 20 per cent inflation in total expenditure on food. In a labour household more than 75 per cent of consumer expenditure is on food, which means that now on an average expenditure on food constitutes almost 90 per cent of the total wages in households

that earn Rs 100 or less a month. So, very little money is left for other necessities of life. Clothing, education, transport, medical attention and rents have to be accommodated within less than 10 per cent of money wages by a majority of industrial workers in Eastern India.

Is it any wonder that today's labourer wears tattered clothes, his children swell the number of street urchins because they cannot go to school, he treks miles to and from his work place, he is rickety in physical appearance and devoid of all hope and cheer in life? He is despondent. He is seething with discontent, and beginning to rage and give vent to his rage through demonstrations, sometimes even violent ones. After all he is only trying to respond to the violence generated by high prices and to a situation in which his family cannot be given adequate attention. The slow erosion of his own physical powers acts as a spur to 'do something'. It is in this perspective that political demonstrations generate and take shape. It is, therefore, an over-simplification to suggest that labour unrest is being fomented with a view to getting more votes, though the vote-getting exercise is by no means an illegitimate activity. Even so, the major motivation for militant labour action comes from stark economic necessities.

What is true of West Bengal is more true of Bihar, Assam and Orissa. These three States do not have any worthwhile rationing programmes. The result is that rice is selling at Rs 2 to Rs 2.50 a kilogram at Ranchi, Rs 1 to Rs 1.50 a kilogram at Rourkela, and Rs 1.75 a kilogram at Jorhat and Gauhati. These are open market prices of the main staple food in these States. A worker getting less than Rs 100 a month but with a family of four or more to support has practically nothing left for any other expenses. Since the degree of industrial concentration is less in these three States than in West Bengal, labour demonstrations there have been less militant, perhaps even less spectacular, but the basic trend is clear beyond any doubt. Thus, if food prices go up further, more labour unrest would follow, general elections or no general elections.

Since labour households are unable to buy clothes, footwear and many other items of general consumption, large stocks remain with dealers.

This over-stocking still seems limited within the trade pipelines, but it is bound to reach the manufacturing centres within a few months or at most within a year. When it reaches the mills, it is bound to result in lay-offs. In fact, in some industries, jute for instance, lay-offs have already started because of high prices of jute goods and lack of availability of raw jute for processing. Similar trends are visible in consumer durables like electric fans, refrigerators and the like. Gradually lay-offs have begun in these industries. Collieries have been trying to shed labour for some time because of stagnation in coal demand.

Unemployment

Industrial labour clearly fears that as a result of deficit-financing and high prices of consumer goods and the latest pruning of the Plan expenditures, more unemployment will be deliberately created and the increasing unemployment will then be used to force him to accept a wage-freeze, making his condition still worse. He is beginning to react to this fear; he is becoming more militant, more vociferous in his demands, more steely in his resolve to fight it out now when he has still a chance rather than at a later date when he might be weakened, his ranks divided, his leaders locked away, in jails under preventive detention acts and his will to fight sapped by a combination of adverse circumstances.

Congress strategists think that high food prices help the farmer which in turn may get them rural votes. It does not do any thing of the sort. These high prices may help a limited number of rich peasants—Indian kulaks—but the majority of Indian farmers are either small landowners or are totally landless peasants. High prices create profits that vanish somewhere with middlemen. Thus the poor peasant is as much affected by high prices of food and consumer goods as the industrial worker. This is particularly true of cash-crop farmers, for instance those who grow jute. Their economic plight is no less patent as an explosive factor than that of the industrial worker. Particularly in Assam, it is these landless labourers that have shown militancy against rising prices. In Bihar also, the basic militancy of the anti-Government struggles is seen in semi-rural rather than industrial areas,

though, of course, movements to secure higher dearness allowances for lower-paid staff continue to grow both in industrial areas also and even in Government offices. Recent events in Lucknow a few hundred miles away from Patna were a clearer example of this sort of widening of the orbit of discontent. Even non-industrial workers are shedding their fear.

Left Unity

On the negative side, these gathering storms of labour unrest have not been able to instil a sense of unity among the diverse Left parties. Though they have agreed to avoid mutual contests in the coming elections, they have not worked out any unified approach to this worsening of economic conditions of the working people. So far as the Leftists are concerned, food protest movements are taking the shape of political protests alone, something that blunts the edges of the movement against high prices and the reactionary economic policy of the Government as a whole.

It is clear that if Left unity to fight the forces of reaction does not materialise, the growing despondency among the working class may turn into anarchy, something that might invite dictatorship in some guise or the other. The united opposition possesses the necessary strength to reverse the anti-people policies of the Government and so save the democratic framework of our development. They have the strength to save the economy from stagnation and improve the economic condition of the industrial worker, lower-echelon Government employee and the landless labourer. They must learn to wield this power in a creative manner, in a prudent manner. If, however, the tide of fascism sweeps India in the wake of anarchy, the Left also would have to answer for the debacle.

We have taken these "Peace in Vietnam" banners into every capital of the world. I cannot see why the Hanoi-Haiphong oil raids can interfere with the search for peace.

Dean Rusk

To cover a country as big as this with 43 'ideal' department stores shows that the Government has not exhausted all its sense of humour.

Gee Bee in Hindustan Standard

Delhi Letter

Smokescreen For Attack ?

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WHO is kidding whom, on the controversial story in *The Statesman* about the alleged Left Communist "strategy of sabotage"? Either Mr Nanda is being taken for a ride by someone in his Ministry or the political correspondent of *The Statesman* has been taken for a ride.

In the charmed existence of the capital's elite correspondents, who have rather unconventional sources of news, the access to which is denied to the more plebian of the lot, such situations rarely occur. But whenever they do, the outcome is always disastrous. It puts the relationship between the Government and the Press under new strains. This is what happened last week. In this case, from his inside knowledge of it, this correspondent can vouch for this: the paper and its correspondent acted in good faith because the story came from what is usually regarded as an authentic source. There is no doubt about that. At the other end, Mr Nanda denied that his Ministry had anything to do with it and it would be wrong to suggest that he was misleading anyone.

There is a lot more to the story. *The Indian Express* rushed in where others feared to tread with its own story of how a Home Ministry official gave the correspondent an indication that the Ministry was not aware of any such plan though it knew the plan was rejected by the majority at Tenali. The correspondent also tried to draw a red herring across the trail, quoting an unidentified Left Communist leader as saying that the "Dange group" might have inspired *The Statesman* story.

Mr Nanda disclosed in the Lok Sabha that he had written to *The Statesman* about the report. But let it be recorded here that a responsible man in the paper asked a very senior ICS Secretary on the telephone if the Government would mind the paper carrying the letter along with a short footnote by the political correspondent. The man speaking from the Government end got cold feet.

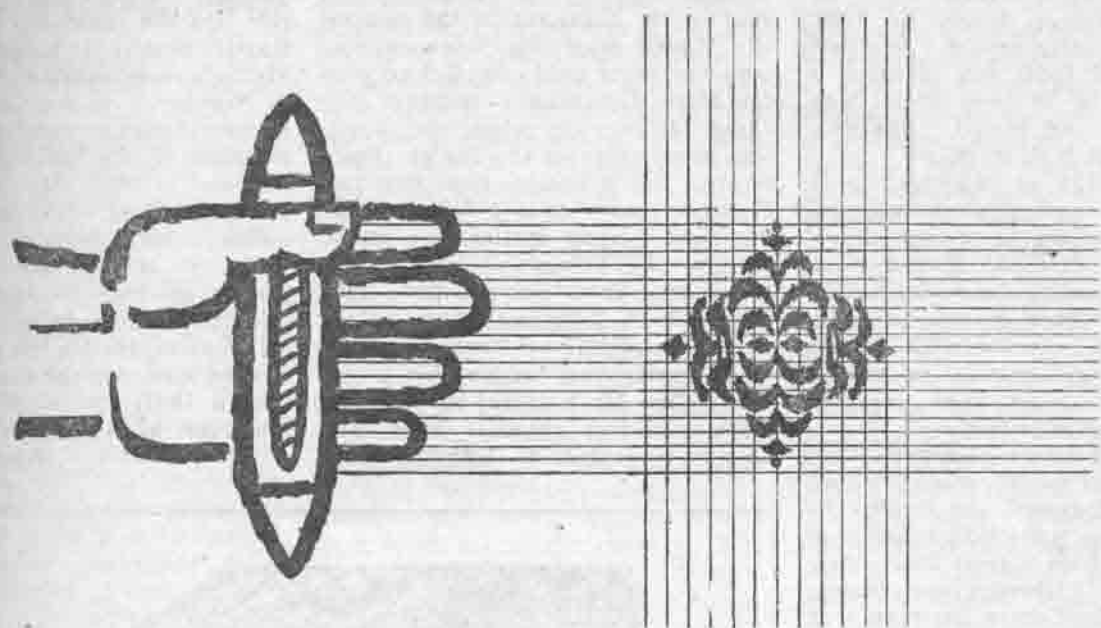
Not very surprisingly, a PSP leader

in Bombay, as well as the correspondent of a Gujarati daily in Bombay got the story on the same day as *The Statesman* decided to carry it.

CIA Fashion

This report has sinister significance in the wake of certain other disturbing reports. As for the report itself, there are several issues involved. Gopalan, Mr Umanath and Renu Chakravarti alleged in the Lok Sabha that someone in the Home Ministry gave the handout to select correspondents. Obviously, the person who "planted" the story in CIA fashion was trying to back up his story. If nothing else, the leaking of an Intelligence report is involved here but Mr Nanda would not agree to a probe to establish the Government's bona fides.

Someone in the Home Ministry under the CIA's inspiration, had a story circulated surreptitiously among a number of correspondents. But it is not to suggest that *The Statesman* correspondent got it from this source. He might have his own source. The upshot of the episode has a sad result for all, and those who did not know the story have no reason to congratulate themselves on their discretion. The elite correspondents have long used to getting information from certain sources and rushing to print without verification. The strategy of those who plant the stories is to not more than one of the elite to have confidence at a time. Every story of this kind is vested with the hope of a scoop, though in this particular case it was not really meant to be a scoop. The closest parallel this correspondent could recall is Gen Thimmaiah's resignation episode. The then political correspondent of the same paper tripped up badly, acting on a tip at a cocktail party and constructing everything around this bit of gossip passed on to him, with a definite purpose because the day the story appeared Mr Krishna Menon was to leave for the UN. Last year, there was another episode, a minor one and less consequential at that, when one of the two news agencies circled



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— Jawaharlal Nehru



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a fantastic story with a New Delhi dateline and later everyone knew who planted it—that Pakistan would explode an atomic bomb in 1968. When a Canadian report a few days ago suggested India was planning a nuclear test in 30 days, official New Delhi huffed and hawed. The weapon could cut both ways.

The "strategy of sabotage" story was clearly aimed at something tangible. It had an immediate political purpose. It could disrupt whatever understanding the seven Leftist parties had reached on common election strategy. Secondly, it would provide the smokescreen for a mass round-up which has been expected for quite some time now.

During the Chief Minister's jam-boree here last month, when law and order were discussed, the dossier circulated to the participants had contained enough to suggest that a new attack on civil liberties was coming. After that, the Centre has even sent lists of Left and Right Communists and the SSP functionaries who had to be watched in the weeks to come and rounded up when the "go ahead" signal came from New Delhi.

No one knows if Mr Nanda is preparing another White Paper. Back in 1964 he promised one and it turned out to be so immaculately white that it exposed the entire Home Ministry to ridicule. It was done in such a hurry because the promise had been made and there was already some delay in keeping it. So those who compiled it were hard pressed for material and it contained such absurdities as this: several Left Communist leaders were noticed visiting hill stations in north India obviously to establish links with the Chinese across the border! Later, when top officials converged on New Delhi for a pow-wow, they were bitter and critical that they were hustled into producing such a document, which had made them a laughing stock.

With Mr Kamaraj away, Mr Subramaniam's resignation issue has been hanging fire. Whatever the merits of the issue, there is little doubt that at least four members of the Cabinet would like him to go. The Syndicate would welcome it so that a Cabinet reshuffle could be forced and nominees of the Syndicate gain more important portfolios in the bargain.

Mr Subramaniam blossomed into a technocrat only after he moved over to New Delhi in 1962. But it would

be well to recount his political past before New Delhi discovered his technocratic efficiency. In 1952, after the rout of the Congress in the composite Madras State, Mr Subramaniam, who had never held office before, was the High Command's nominee for Chief Ministership when the party was in minority in the Madras legislature. But it became clear that the Congress cannot form a Ministry unless some splinter parties were roped in and the Communist-led United Democratic Front was smashed. The crafty Mr C. Rajagopalachari surfaced from political wilderness and Mr Subramaniam was his Number 2. In 1954, when Mr Kamaraj toppled Mr Rajagopalachari (Madras State was already truncated to form Andhra

State) the solid Communist block of 62 in the House was reduced to 2 and the Congress had a clear majority. In the leadership contest after Rajaji's ouster, Mr Kamaraj trounced Mr Subramaniam, but retained him as Number 2 in his Cabinet. The Kamaraj-Subramaniam conflict is an extension of the Kamaraj-Rajaji conflict and in 1962, Mr Subramaniam was rocked and rolled out of Madras politics. Mr Subramaniam's political future is at stake now because he cannot go back to Madras politics (Mr Alagesan is being groomed by Mr Kamaraj for Madras Chief Ministership, assuming the Congress would win in 1967). So much depends on Mr Kamaraj's return to India.

August 14, 1967



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A Post-Independence Growth

COMMENTATOR

FEW things have changed so drastically in the years of independence as our newspapers. For better or for worse it is difficult to say, for the answer depends on how one looks at it. The service conditions of journalists have improved—some of the papers to a degree that would have appeared fabulous on the eve of independence. Disparities still exist, but it is useless to deny that there has been a process of general levelling up and journalists today are better positioned than many other salaried groups.

Their relative prosperity is a symptom of the affluence of newspapers. Newspaper proprietors are among the new-rich of the country. Political influence has ceased to be the sole motivation behind publication of newspapers; it has become lucrative business too, and no wonder top industrial magnates and speculators have entered the field. In pre-independence days many of the newspaper proprietors would have regarded it as unflattering to be called a businessman or an industrialist; but none of them will cavil at such descriptions now. The label is no longer scoffed at; on the contrary, it is worn proudly on the lapel. The old generation has adapted itself to this transformation; the new generation has it ingrown. No eyebrows are raised now if a man unconnected with any business except newspaper becomes president of a chamber of commerce.

It will be wrong to assume that increase in circulation alone has brought this affluence to the industry. True, most newspapers are selling more copies than in the years around independence, but their incomes have gone up many times more than what is warranted by increased circulation alone. Nor can the increase in newspaper prices account for this spectacular prosperity. Compared with the general price rise newspaper prices have virtually remained steady—an increase of less

than three paise in nineteen years is negligible.

In fact, despite all this noise over increased allotment of newsprint, it is doubtful if the owners of the bigger units are really keen to increase the circulation of their papers. They have reached a point where increased circulation cannot bring them substantial additional revenue. Production costs and overhead charges being what they are, the margin of profit from sale of newspapers has dwindled considerably. Certainly it will be further reduced if the papers have to depend more on indigenous newsprint. It is not without reason that the clamour is for imported newsprint only, the price of which even after devaluation is less than our own products. If newspapers were really in that need of pushing up circulation, more newsprint mills would have come up in the country. But no move has been taken in that direction by newspaper proprietors, though almost all of them are votaries of the private sector. Their papers are loud in preaching the virtues of the Swadeshi spirit, import substitution and self-reliance, but in their own field they would much rather depend on cheap imported newsprint than costly indigenous products.

Advertisements

Newspaper prosperity is largely dependent on advertisement revenue which has gone up steadily in the years of independence. The proliferation of economic activities is generating advertisements in diverse fields; the battle between the public and the private sector is being fought on newspaper pages through advertisement; the Government is trying to put across its case through advertisement, though the total newspaper readership is only an insignificant fraction of the country's population. An instance of this last was the series of advertisements worth lakhs of rupees that were released to the Press by different governmental agencies during the food movement in West Bengal in March-April. Big newspapers are now refusing advertisements which already occupy sixty to seventy per cent of their space. It is not unreasonable to suspect that the demand for more newsprint is being made not so much for increasing sales as for increasing the number of pages so that more advertisements can be accommodated. Here

is maximum profit with minimum expenditure and effort.

This spirit of commerce has made newspaper proprietors align themselves with those on whose prosperity their own prosperity depends. Some of them, of course, are businessmen first; those who are not have chosen to be fellow-travellers of a kind. The impact of this alliance is being felt in many fields of the newspaper industry. The older generation of journalists, haunted by memories of what newspapers used to be, have been largely replaced by a new set taught to look upon the profession as just another way of earning one's livelihood. In most papers the editor has lost his primacy and has become the head of one of a number of departments. The problem of dealing with a difficult editor who refuses to equate public good with the private gain of the proprietor has been solved in some papers by the proprietor himself becoming the editor so that what the proprietor finds to be in his interest may be easily laid down as editorial policy. Editorship is tending to become hereditary like proprietorship, as if the post did not require any specialised training or aptitude.

Newspapers have thus become a part of the anonymous empire of lobbies that try to influence Government policies in devious ways. They have become an instrument to pressurise the Government into actions designed to further the class interest of the money-making elite. Their anger at policies which may act to the detriment of the class they serve is reminiscent of the fiery newspaper writings of pre-independence days. At the same time, they do not stint in their support and praise for the Government whenever they are able to seduce or bully it into decisions which serve the interest of the class of their choice. Sectional and national interests cannot always coincide, and whenever they are in clash it is the national interest that is sacrificed almost invariably, even by papers which continue to call themselves nationalist.

This has resulted in a kind of love-hate relationship between newspapers and the Government, though basically most of them are establishment papers. Their support to the Government is spasmodic, for the Government cannot altogether ignore public opinion and has to yield to

it occasionally. This is the reason why newspapers today are more appreciative of the Congress Government than they were in Jawaharlal Nehru's time. The first few years of independence were, of course, an exception; not because the newspapers liked the policy he was evolving but because they had to grow out of the habit of endorsing whatever Nehru said or did. In later years, especially after the border dispute with China had come to light, they were definitely hostile to the economic and foreign policies of Nehru. Their criticism grew in bitterness as Nehru, secure in his popularity with the masses, continued to ignore them. The tirade that was mounted against Nehru after the Sino-Indian clash would have toppled any other Prime Minister, and even Nehru had to modify his policy to the delight of newspapers and those whose cause they champion.

More Charitable

To the subsequent two Prime Ministers newspapers have been more charitable, for they are not of the same stuff as Nehru. From the beginning of his career as Prime Minister the late Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri

received full support from the Press, for newspapers knew that he would be amenable to persuasion and pressure as he would have to depend on newspaper support. The process of modification of Nehru's policy started stealthily in Shastri's time. Newspapers were quick to detect it, and they lost no time in becoming his cheer-leaders. Of Mrs Gandhi they were suspicious in the beginning, for they feared that she might prove too much of her father's daughter and the brief Shastri interlude might end with the daughter coming in. Going through today's newspapers it is difficult to believe that only seven months ago some of these same papers had bemoaned the fate of the country with a Prime Minister whose only apparent qualification for the post was that she was Nehru's daughter. Apprehensions were expressed openly that she might not only try to enforce outdated policies but also fall under the wrong kind of influences. Since then newspapers have been gallant enough to discover in her unsuspected virtues that make for an ideal Prime Minister, presumably because she is allowing the right kind of influences to guide her. Her direction of affairs has been so satisfying that

even the scandal of devaluation found few critics in the Press.

Devaluation is only one of the issues over which newspapers have deliberately refrained from giving expression to public resentment. Some omissions may be endearing them to the Government but are vitiating their relations with the people. A feeling is fast growing that the interests of the common people, their sufferings and grievances, are quite low in the revised order of priority drawn up by newspapers in recent years. Their anger and frustration some people have turned on papers they think delinquent. Boycott and bonfire of newspapers in different parts of West Bengal have become events of frequency disquieting for a section of the Press. Although the big papers have outgrown absolute dependence on circulation for their prosperity there is a limit beyond which a paper can allow its sales to drop. Temporary repairs are being made by the affected papers through modification of news and editorial policies but these alone cannot re-establish the lost rapport. Newspapers will have to turn the light inwards to get to the root of their trouble with the public.

A Tradition of Service & Enterprise

A hundred and twelve years ago, to this day, the first train in Eastern India ran a distance of 38 kms from Howrah to Hooghly. Braving the elements and wild animals, the pioneers and workers laid the foundation, not only of a great transport system, but also an institution of national solidarity.

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AUGUST 15 1966 EASTERN RAILWAY



The first train on the East Indian Railway: August 15, 1854

The Russians On Tilak

SAROJ ACHARYYA

TILAK and Swadeshi and the parting of the ways between the Moderates and the Extremists constitute the first conscious phase of India's freedom movement. Tilak's birth centenary was celebrated in 1966. A group of Soviet Indologists produced on this occasion a commemorative volume of studies on several aspects of the Indian nationalist movement in 1905-08. This has been made available now in English translation.* Soviet policymakers and publicists have always taken a friendly and often active and more than academic interest in the colonial liberation movements. The Empire of the Tsars was, after all, a string of colonies or in emotional phraseology, "a prisonhouse of peoples." So, too, was the Empire of Britain. The Bolsheviks took up both in dealing with the colonial question. They eagerly watched the course of India's freedom movement from the early years of the century. Marx in his analyses on India had supplied the impulse, to which Lenin afterwards gave a steady direction. Then also, even in the Tsarist times Russian scholars had been attracted to India as an interesting field of study. Soviet Indology has carried forward the tradition and given it a new dimension by applying Marxist methods of analysis and interpretation. For a time there was even more to it than mere analysis and interpretation. The Bolsheviks claiming to be the inheritors of Marx believed that their historic task was not merely to explain but also to change the course of world history. This is how Soviet Indology in line with Soviet ideology often struck a challenging note and provoked fierce controversy. Co-existence may have now exorcised its voice and put a curb on that old Bolshevik spirit of outspoken criticism.

No doubt the times have changed. The Revolution of 1917 encouraged

Lenin to dream of a future in which India and China taking their place by the side of the Soviet Union would strike the death-knell of world imperialism. Lenin's vision has been partly fulfilled but in the process part of the tremendous expectations of the 1920s and 1930s has been lost or has run into a series of bewildering contradictions. The struggle for Indian freedom, for instance, now seems to have been both won and at least partly lost. The Soviet historians in the collection of essays under review have kept themselves strictly limited to the early phase of the struggle for Indian freedom. They have refrained from throwing any hint about the present in the light of the past. This is a little disappointing. A major work of historical study, especially from the hands of Soviet scholars, should have at least suggested how the Extremist phase of India's national politics in Tilak's time ultimately ended in the confusion and compromise of 1947. The Soviet historians obviously have preferred to keep on the side of angels so as not to give any serious offence to orthodox Indian nationalist sentiments. Their studies in the present volume thus follow more or less conventional lines, although they deserve credit for collecting a vast amount of hitherto neglected facts about the social and economic setting of the Indian national movement in 1905-08.

Estimate of Extremism

The Soviet historians' estimate of Tilakite Extremism is highly selective. It is based on an unanalysed belief that any anti-imperialist posture must by itself be forward-looking and progressive. And the attempt also to draw a sharp distinction between the bourgeois and the petty-bourgeois class affiliations respectively of the Moderates and the Extremists leads to exaggerated conclusions. On many social and economic questions the Moderates held far more reasonably progressive views than the Extremists. Tilak's Extremism was concerned primarily with the method of fighting the foreign rulers. That the Moderates were generally

averse to mass contacts and unwilling to seek mass sanctions against British rule is true enough. But the Extremists' interest in the masses the Soviet historians should not have taken only at its face value. Marx in his *Eighteenth Brumaire* did definitely point out that petty-bourgeois sympathy for the masses must by its very origin be often self-deceptive. Dr Goldberg only casually notes that on economic issues there was not much to distinguish between the Moderates and the Extremists. "Tilak was much less outspoken against the moneylender", he also was not keen on labour legislation. Political extremism may well conceal and nourish a lot of class-bound economic selfishness. Whom the Soviet historians have described as "petty bourgeois revolutionary democrats" were neither revolutionary nor quite democratic when it came to the question of giving the exploited masses a fair deal. In Bengal, more than in Maharashtra, this contradiction was glaring. Much of Bengal's politics, even extremist politics, was lawyer-landlord-ridden; even the dedicated revolutionists, sworn anti-British all, hardly ever appeared to be anti-feudal and anti-capitalist.

It might be argued that the anti-imperialist struggle in its early phase naturally brought together all kinds of forces under the banner of Extremism. Even so, the Soviet historians should have laid bare the contradictory elements and the limiting factors. And this could have by implication pointed to the causes leading step by step to the present shape of India's unfinished revolution. The Mehtas, Subramanians and Patils of today might, for all their worth, be representing on an extended scale the contradictions and compromises of the early phase of the Indian national movement.

Conservative Tendencies

In overstressing the anti-imperialist nature of the Indian national awakening of 1905-08, the Soviet historians have slurred over many of its irrational and conservative tendencies. In a traditional society patriotic fervour easily runs into a religious mould. This in India, for obvious reasons, appeared, in the first instance, as Hindu revivalism. The political consequences of this revivalist trend have not been adequately dealt with by the Soviet historians.

*Tilak And The Struggle For Indian Freedom.

Edited by E. M. Reisman and N. M. Goldberg.
People's Publishing House, New Delhi.
Pp. 322. Rs. 30/-.

Komarov's essay on Social Thought in Bengal in the late 19th and early 20th centuries merely skims the surface and overvalues stray phrases on Hindu-Muslim unity. Goldberg takes note of Tilak's "anti-Muslim communalism" only to shrug it off. It is neither history nor Marxist understanding to present communalism and all that solely as a product of the British imperialist policy of Divide and Rule.

These are serious inadequacies and flaws of interpretation in a volume of historical studies otherwise packed with facts and hitherto unexplored materials. Indian scholars have certainly much to learn from the discipline displayed and the insights gained by the Soviet historians in their searching analysis of the agrarian and working conditions in Maharashtra in 1905-08. Chicherov's essay on Tilak's trial and the Bombay political strike of 1908 is a remarkable account to be valued both for its freshness and mastery of detail. It is in their interpretation of the working class unrest of the period that the Soviet historians assume too much and tend to exaggerate its anti-imperialist character. Minor inaccuracies, mostly verbal, might be justly ignored but it seems unfortunate that the Soviet historians who have been thoroughgoing in collecting facts have had to rely almost entirely on source materials in English. The essay on Bengali social thought could have been improved and the revivalist reformist contradiction sufficiently exposed by directly drawing from Bengali sources. In this respect some recent Soviet studies on Rammohan and Bankim based on Bengali sources are decidedly better and excellent specimens of Soviet scholarship. Having said all this, it has to be ungrudgingly admitted that some of the essays contained in the volume under review provide rewarding insights and deserve commendation as models of historical inquiry in depth.

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Durgadas in Hindusthan Standard



About Nehru

THE NEHRU LEGACY—
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Nehru—Life And Work

By Chelapathi Rao

National Book Club. Re 1.50

A symposium in which a Congress chief, a Communist, a member of the Government, an economist, a journalist and a jurist are invited to inventory particular aspects of a man like Nehru, individual assessments, though undoubtedly sincere, tend perforce to be somewhat parochial. Mr Hiren Mukerjee lovingly remembers him as "the beautiful though ineffectual angel", the great architect and upholder of parliamentary democracy whom "one hesitates to call a great parliamentarian", the man who could say "no" both to communalism and private enterprise but stem neither, the man who was catholic enough to pay tribute to Lenin and Communists (while holding them in jail in his country without trial, a fact Mr Mukerjee forgets to mention). Mr Kamaraj contents himself with pointing out Nehru's undying faith in the ability of the Congress to deliver the goods, his struggles, with some measure of success, with the Rightists within the Congress, the possibility of the Congress being purified and holds out an invitation to the young to join it. Mr Bibhuti Mishra, whose heart appears to lie with the peasants of Champaran, regrets with refreshing frankness the post-independence trooping in of the landlords and the well-to-do into the Congress and the way they thwarted all anti-feudal measures. Mr Dinesh Singh, Nehru's colleague in the Government, drama-

tises Nehru's sharing 'half an apple' at the breakfast table with Mr Singh into the Bandung spirit, forgetting that Nehru's decency was never doubted and goes on to blame China and Pakistan for the crumbling of the Panch Shil.

In this chorus of apologia two voices, those of Mr Setalvad and Dr Gyanchand, strike a somewhat discordant note. They refuse to explain away 'the shadow between the conception and creation' as being the result of the wickedness without but look further and explore the weaknesses within. While Mr Mukerjee is carried away by Nehru's beautiful venting of concepts like 'the commanding heights in the economy being in social control', and apologues for him by saying "The follow-up action was not his forte", Dr Gyanchand looks deeper and finds that "the only way in which the process (through which rural oligarchies consolidated their powers under Panchayati Raj and appropriated most of the benefits of the development expenditure, and in the course of which the village economy became more hierarchical and undermined the foundations of political democracy) could be checked and reversed was to create centres of countervailing powers and generate forces through which money-power in the rural economy could be neutralised and

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the book by Mr Rao is a collec-
of talks broadcast from All India
radio on the occasion of Nehru's
birthday. Such talks hardly ever move
beyond sweeping generalisations,
assertions and a lot more of
adulation. Mr Rao has not
impressed us. He is, as they say,
in form. But I think that even
All India Radio would have tolerat-
ed a little more analysis. Moreover,
the book is mortally afraid
of analysis and begins by in-
forming us about Nehru's refusal to
become a dictator
and up with the picture of a
"most courageous, noblest, most
gentle, and most energetic", "one
of the finest instruments of historical
change the world has known". Mr
Rao is evidently not satisfied and
"No other great leader has ever
used such high seriousness and
purpose with such a spirit of
sincerity". And in between we find

Annual Book Club which appears
interested in stimulating serious
reading could have left it to AIR
which it was originally meant.

MONI SEN

Ode To A Nightingale

SAROJINI NAIDU—
A BIOGRAPHY

By Padmini Sengupta
Asian Publishing House, Bombay
Rs. 26

POET and dreamer, patriot and fighter, friendly soul and peace-maker, Sarojini Naidu enlivened the political stage of India for over three decades, till her death in 1949. As an orator, hers was the gift of inspired utterance and happy expression, though not the depth of political wisdom. She was conscious of her genius, but knew her limitations as well, and therefore it was that she looked up to Gokhale or Gandhi or Nehru for leadership. Without sharing the Mahatma's austere outlook on life, she could pledge her faith to him with mental reservations. A faithful disciple, prepared to follow him to the ends of the earth, she could call him "Micky Mouse" and take no end of liberties with him, for she was indeed the "licensed jester of the Mahatma's little court." While the world hailed her as the "Nightingale of India" (and she always remained so, for she never ceased to sing, in verse or prose, in writing or in speech), she had humour enough to enjoy a quip against her, when somebody called her "the Naughty Gal of India". It was no easy job to keep the wild bird in a glided cage in her lifetime (as she remarked on her governorship in free India). It can be no easier one to capture her personality—vivid and vital, irreverent and irrepressible—in the pages of a biography, over a decade and a half after her death. Her friend and admirer Padmini Sengupta has certainly done her best in her substantial book, which is well-written and well-documented.

In discussing Sarojini's poetic career, Padmini Sengupta does not let her admiration run away with her judgment. Her sympathy is always there, of course. In reply to some of the less sympathetic of the modern critics who are apt to dismiss Sarojini's poetry as jingling verse or playing rhetoric, she draws attention to the fact that three of her poems were included in the *Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse*.

Sarojini was a daughter of Bengal and a daughter-in-law of the South. Her biographer is an example of the

process in reverse—a daughter of the South and a daughter-in-law of Bengal. No wonder, she is quite *en rapport* with her mercurial subject. Married to a younger brother of Deshapriya J. M. Sen Gupta, she is in a position of vantage in recalling quite a few of the personal anecdotes relating to Sarojini's frequent visits to Calcutta. A life-long friend of Dr B. C. Roy, she was an interesting patient, not above helping herself to chocolate bars and chicken patties, on the sly, though under the strictest orders about a severe diet. "Don't you know me? Why, the whole world knows me," she would flare up at the bank clerk who would not have her draft cashed instantly. Countless must be such encounters, of which we have a sizable number in this book. But the reader could do with a few more, for no healthy man can get tired of Sarojini's wit.

Of the political leader and the orator, who could command the winged word (e.g. "We do not cry for the moon, we pluck it from the skies and wear it upon the diadem of Asia's freedom."), there is a lot in this book. Also, of the Governor, who could bring the lion to lie down with the lamb in Lucknow. But not enough, perhaps, about the wife and the mother, who had built a happy home at the "The Golden Threshold", in the quiet feudal shelter of Hyderabad, far from the din and bustle and the limelight of Gandhian politics. One would certainly have liked to know a little more (than the indifferent para or two available here) about that patient and self-effacing army physician, who made it possible for the illustrious wife to wander as she liked, free from the cares of house-keeping, and to hold court in her suit at the Taj in Bombay, like a Duchess in the salons of Paris before the French Revolution.

D. ANJANEYULU

Many businessmen imagine that the Congress will always be in power and they will face ruin if they oppose the Congress. This illusion has to be removed. If they vote against the Congress, the Congress will not be in power and then it cannot ruin them.

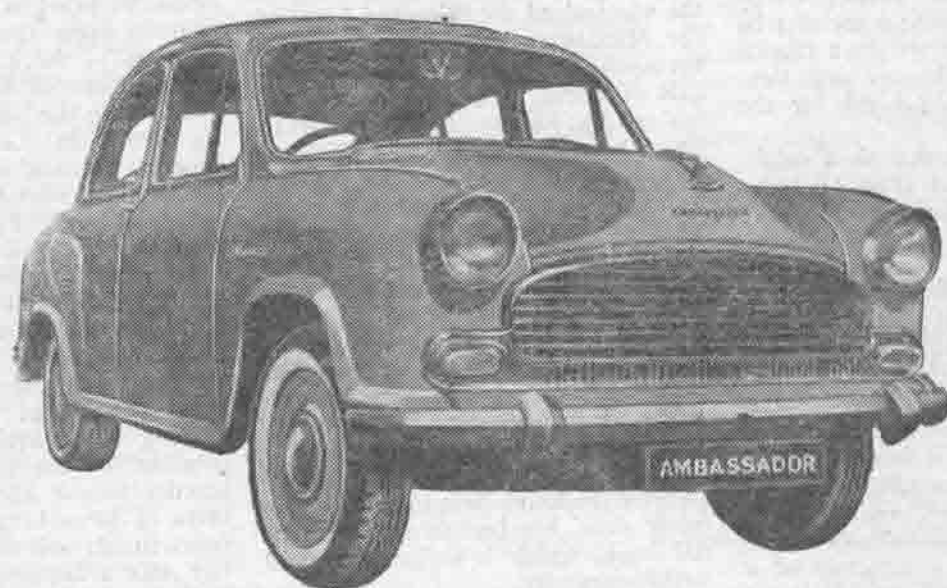
C. Rajagopalachari

He (Harold Wilson) would do better to remember that statesmanship, like charity, begins at home.

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Theatre Of The Absurd

By A DRAMA CRITIC

ON August 5 Chaturmukh staged Mohit Chatterjee's *Nil Ranger Ghorah*. Chaturmukh is a leading actor of Calcutta and Mohit Chatterjee has already written a number of plays. The expectations, naturally, were very great. But the play did

not come up to them. We left the auditorium baffled, bored and confused.

The confusion was largely due to the confused nature of the play. Mr Chatterjee has a mind unfortunately more attuned to literature than to life. Readily aligning himself with Ms Ionesco & Co., he fails to assimilate their attitudes and merely imitates their doctrines, postures and techniques. He would like to follow Ionesco's 'absurd techniques'. But while Ionesco's formal experiments grow out of his material, Mr Chatterjee's seem grafted onto his, giving the impression of a jumble. In fact, all the confusion in *Nil Ranger Ghorah* seems to originate from his desire to be an 'Absurdist'. At the heart of the play, there is a very logical story with a touch of fantasy—the story of a man who in his youth was a fanatical lover of horse races. Now he is a ruined man. One Friday, a fantastically dressed boy brings him the results of the races to be run on the following day. He goes to the races, stakes everything and wins. The same thing happens over and over again for years. Now rich and old, the hero revolts at the whole idea but he must go on since his mercenary wife and daughter insist. Finally, one Friday, he receives a newspaper from the boy, which prophesies his death on the following Sunday. This theme of a pathetic man obsessed with an idea might be a gripping one. Here is some material out of which a tragedy of a sensitive neurotic could be constructed. But forcing us to find the 'absurdity of existence' in this logical and coherent story is too heavy a claim on our imagination. The trouble starts when Mr Chatterjee tries to transform the normal into the absurd. Hence the intrusion of the 'blue-horse symbol', the relevance of which is difficult to guess; the bundle of clichés about the soul and Existence; the out-of-season nostalgia; the frequent use of absolutely personal cricket-images; and the irrelevant quotations from Shakespeare. Actually, Mr Chatterjee is wasting his powers in his attempts to be 'absurd'. He should save himself by giving up the idea of saving 'absurd drama'.

There is not much to say about the performance except that the performers were almost always competently incompetent. The pronunciation was always bad; repetition was 'repeta-tion', 'practice' was 'practish', 'race' was 'resh', and to crown all, 'ghorah'

was never pronounced without nasalization. The delivery was equally bad. The actors either spoke in a degenerate conventional manner or delivered their speeches with 'Twinkle, twinkle little star' or 'Thirty days in September' rhythm. The whole conception was clumsy. The sets were suggestive, the blockings conventional, the movements natural. Bimal Chakravarti with his set-designs, Chitta Mukherjee with his effective music and Chitrita Mandal with her sane acting tried their best. But what could a few lonely members of a wayward crew do when the captain himself lost his compass?



Only For Love

By A FILM CRITIC

THE magnetic pull of love makes the heroine of *Paari* (directed by Jagannath Chatterjee) take a ship to the Andamans where her lover Ghanasyam is condemned to life imprisonment. But when they finally meet, it seems that no deep emotional attachment exists between them and that one has just come to say hello to the other. In this context, the final outbursts of passion leading to a climactic embrace to the tune of the play-out music seem entirely pointless and the labours for weaving such a long-winding plot are wholly wasted. The script is a hopeless medley of absurd situations (set in a village with all the stock village types of the Bengali screen muscling in) and the poor camera work, shapeless editing and innocuous music-direction, all conspire to make this first directorial assignment of Mr Chatterjee (his previous experiences were with two film groups) an artistic flop.

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Kalpana

heroine tries to recreate the plot of her film debut *Tathapi*, but has forgotten the single fact that even the release of *Tathapi* and the present film, fifteen long winters have passed, and what was charming then could become plainly ridiculous today. Of the two Bombay actors acting as the box-office boosters, the one as Ghanasyam is less impressive when he is mute, but when he breaks into atrocious Bengali in the emotional scenes, one is tempted to take a permanent holiday from cinema. Dilipkumar makes a very good appearance towards the end of the film as the compassionate jailor of the Schular jail and he steals most of the audiences' claps.

The Great Race

Love launches ships to the distant lands, it also shapes the course of the *Great Race* (Elite) from New York to Paris in which two rival gamblers, the Great Leslie (played by Tony Curtis clad in spotless white) and Prof Fate (a beautifully moustached Jack Lemon dishing out an ingenious mixture of Groucho Marx and Oliver Hardy), participate. The interesting sidelights are provided by the brilliant Peter Falk as Fate's assistant, apparently a nitwit, but like the youngest of the Marx Brothers, acts unusually sharp in times of crisis. Natalie Wood as the roving reporter of *The New York Sentinel* covering the race, inspires the competitors with their miraculous feats and inevitably the film ends with Tony Curtis and Natalie Wood bound by the holy rites of matrimony. The director, Mike Edwards, has dedicated his film to Laurel and Hardy and indeed serves as a wonderful tribute to all the best things that Hollywood once stood for. As the film progresses down the memory lane we go, picking up tidbits from the past, catches from early Chase films, Keystone comedies, references to the Westerns, Zigfield revues (dancing in the Boracho-Saloon), Lubitsch elegants (reproduced here in the style of the Central European palaces), loving pastiches from American musicals, Capra-brand sophisticated comedies of newspapermen and fiery suffragettes; even the mustard-pie farce has its right place in Edward's scheme of things. Throughout the film, the spirit of wit and trick predominates, and the unerring visual sense of the director has

made a film of remarkable pace out of an almost non-existent story-line.

Love At Twenty

Love is also the theme of the omnibus film by five directors of different nationalities and this time it is *Love at Twenty* (New Empire). The passions, conflicts, hesitations, torments and exuberance of young love are treated in different styles by these directors, of which the French episode directed by Francois Truffaut (the moving tale of a frustrated love experienced by Antoine, the grown-up boy of *Four Hundred Blows*, who is sensitively played by Jean Pierre Leaud) and Andrej Wajda's Polish sequence (a sort of sequel to *Innocent Sorcerers*, the charm, romance and the melancholy of casual acquaintance portrayed in a masterly way) leave a marked impression. The other episodes (German, Italian and Japanese) do have occasional purple patches, and these young film-makers have definitely used their camera as a medium for expressing the turmoils of the modern young mind. Some excellent stills by Cartier-Bresson depicting the right atmosphere of young love have been used as links between the pieces. As the film is having an unusually short run in the commercial circuit (it is being shown for three days only), we do hope that the film societies would surely revive this fine film in their programme.



Masks And Landscapes

BY AN ART CRITIC

FOR the actor, the mask serves to create a surreal type and to facilitate a journey into the world of the imagination. To the audience, the mask takes away the person it

knows and invests the wearer with something which is awful and non-human, a god or a devil.

Therese Le Prat's photographs of human features hidden behind masks or half-hidden faces behind make-up, now on show in the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta, conjure up both the divine and the evil aspects of the human world. The expressions on the faces touch the entire gamut of human emotions, ranging from exultation to depression, from tenderness to malignity. Together with the short lyrical commentaries, the photographs reveal a landscape rich with the foliage of faces.

The visitor is bound, for instance, to be held by the picture of the masked face used in a Franco-German theatrical production with a strangely haunting expression gazing at an open hand. The accompanying poem begins with the lines; "The world was in his hand, the hand opened, the world is no more in his hand." Or take again the face of Yves Lorelle in one of his mimic compositions where 'the load of his head in his hands' brings home to the observer with a poignant intensity the almost unbearable burden of the intellect. Aesthetically, the mask here consecrates the effacement of immediate reality for the benefit of a vaster reality.

Some of the masks used in Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *The Life of Galileo* invent immediately a different world of transparent myths concealing crises of modern life. There is an unconventional approach in the choice of the clown of solitude, a sad clown with closed eyes in Pierre Debauch's face. The next moment we shrink with revulsion from the portrait of the Serpent in Jean Dutoit's *The Tree* acted by Andre Reybaz with two pairs of eyes on his forehead.

Thus the visitor moves from one face to another, gazing at the vibrating immobility. For behind the make-up or the masks the original features peep now and then and one can never escape the weird feeling of movement of shapes, sliding of facial muscles in a decoration of lines, vibration of known forms in a prison of fixed frames.

A Young Artist

Of a completely different nature is the exhibition of Animesh Sen Gupta's paintings in the southern gallery

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the Academy. His forte is the landscape. The shapes and forms of his mind lose themselves in a misty atmosphere. In sharp contrast with the preponderance of bold outlines in Ernest Le Prat's pictures, Sen Gupta's paintings evoke a world of dim colours and shy lines. His 'Sky before Monsoon' or 'Before Rain' or the Himalayan landscapes have a touch of evanescence.

In one picture, 'A modern form taken from Konarak', Sen Gupta has created a bold design based on a million sculpture. In spite of a rather insipid colour scheme, the picture displays an imagination which seems to be capable of turning out modern forms from classical designs.

Letters

Spain And Vietnam

In his article "Vietnam and the World", (Now, July 29) Mr Sumanta Banerjee says, "The present seems to be an uncanny repetition of the decade preceding the last World War". On a closer scrutiny, however, one has to conclude that the similarities of the two decades are more imaginary than real.

Mr Banerjee voices his concern at the apathy of public opinion on Vietnam in this decade. But what did the enlightened public opinion of the other decade do to save the Spanish Republic? The Spanish Republic was crushed not so much by the blows that it received at the hands of Franco, but because of the lack of unity within the ranks of the elements that fought for the Republic. Progressive newspapers of the time were full of praise for the heroic deeds of the greenhorns who fought and lost in the ranks of the Republican Army, and throughout the world anti-fascist feelings rose in a crescendo. And yet Spain fell to the Nazis.

Today the picture is entirely different. The feeling against American aggression is almost a fraction of the anti-fascist feelings of those days, including even the Press of the socialist countries. And yet how goes the fight in Vietnam? Are the contemporary Francos, Mussolinis and neofascists having a good time in Vietnam? Mr Banerjee should read the American Press. The men in the

Pentagon and the White House are passing sleepless nights.

The general staff of Franco faced the speechifying Passionaria, but the digital computer Robert McNamara, and the garrulous President Johnson face the sure-shot Giap and the proverbially inscrutable oriental, Ho Chi Minh. The polyglot, inexperienced, idealist and effervescent lot that fought in Madrid and Barcelona is the very opposite of the slit-eyed, tongue-tied, consumptive-looking but battle-stepped boys who fought and won at Dien Bien Phu. And that makes for a world of difference between the two seemingly identical decades.

In the name of saving the Vietnamese from extermination, let us not unwittingly work for the salvaging of the Yankees. Without our joining the feeble and inaudible chorus "Yankees, go home!" they are going home with their feet first, thanks to the silent but efficient Vietnamese.

SHASHIKANT PATEL
Bombay

Mr A. K. Bagchi (August 12) seems to equate the Vietnam war with the Sino-Indian and Indo-Pak border clashes. The former is a liberation war while the latter were purely border disputes and cannot be called wars. These could have been avoided. During the clashes no State, whether socialist or capi-

talist or neutral, was outspoken. So to take North Vietnam as a special case is provocative.

Mr Bagchi is right that it is unjust to expect any revolutionary morality from a bourgeois government like India, but one can demand that this government be more responsible in discharging its duties as chairman of the International Control Commission. If it does not, it should quit the ICC.

The official voice of India is not the only voice. Let the world hear another voice in which India speaks—the voice of the majority of Indians who support the Vietnamese liberation front and condemn the role of the Indian Government and demand complete withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam.

RANA CHATTOPADHYAY
Calcutta

Conspiracy

You are not probably aware that the Communist Party (Left) at Tenali entered into a conspiracy with Red China. It is in fact witchcraft that they decided to practise to deprive India of rains in the pre-election year and thus bring about famine in the country. Our Intelligence Service has persistently practised yoga to gain telepathic knowledge. While the Tenali sitting was on, the Intelli-

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gence men knew without the aid of any physical medium that sabotage would occur on the railways. They did not make their knowledge public until prompted by the Railway Minister for a very good reason. Prior disclosure of knowledge would have meant the trouble of taking precautions. Law will not take cognizance of what you knew until it is proved that you knew and acted or omitted to act unlawfully. It is this understanding of legalistic logic which made our Intelligence men shift the disclosure to a convenient point in time when the dust has settled on the victims of the tragedies and demands for judicial enquiry have been brushed aside.

Dear Editor, if you are wondering why there has been prior disclosure of the Left Communists' plan of crop-burning, you have missed the symbolism of our Intelligence men's language. If through a devilish plot with China the rains did not come and the crop has already failed, where there would be the crop to burn? It follows it has already been burned.

What all these are leading to, you may ask. I foresee this: first, arrests of Left Communists followed by arrests of fellow-travellers. If the people agitate against arrests, the weaklings in the Congress will be swept aside and strongmen and super-patriots will move in, cancel the elections, invite the Americans to bomb discontented people in this country for the sake of freedom and for the benefit of the strongmen. We know by now what happens to a country where the Americans have meddled.

AORAYE
Calcutta

Automation

Thanks for publishing the views of Mr M. Bhattacharjee through your readers' columns (August 5) on automation which is a life and death question for the working class in general in India. It is, however, regrettable that the central trade unions, including the AITUC, are indifferent to this vital issue.

Automation in a land of unemployment and under-employment will help rapid capital formation by the Indian monopoly capitalists at the cost of the working class. Hence New Delhi is installing electronic computers in Government undertakings

first so that the capitalists may follow suit.

TORON SEN
Sodepur

Semantic Revolution

Those who are conscious of the impermanence of the meaning of words will be delighted to read Mr Nirmal Goswami's "The Semantic Revolution" (Now, August 5). Working on Raymond Williams's essay he has finely brought out what is often missed, that the meaning of a word is in a constant process of mutation. But in the case of some newly-coined and widely-used words this flux has a direction while some others, handy for headlines in newspapers, often tend to become imprecise and are finally reduced to jargon.

The 20th century is indeed generating a language to express violent and dynamic emotions, but it is also daily adding to the pile of claptrap. In their frantic endeavour to find the equivalence of their thought-process, politicians and newspapermen are almost daily coining expressions to be circulated and broadcast to millions of readers and listeners. In the next generation these will have only a kind of comic value. It is therefore good to be conscious of the semantic counter-revolution.

ASIM RAY
Calcutta

"Bibidh Bharati"

I would like to draw your attention to the doings of the 'Bibidh Bharati' programme broadcast by AIR. The programme consists chiefly of cheap Hindi film songs, of patched-up and hackneyed tunes. These songs are spoiling the moral climate in our country. As an Indian citizen I cannot but suspect that the programme is an instrument for brainwashing in favour of Hindi. How many hours of Bengali film songs are broadcast in UP and Bihar every week?

SATYA SANDHI GUPTA
Calcutta

It is nothing but sheer raving lunacy to spend millions of dollars to shoot men into space and make them walk there... I simply smile with loathing and contempt at this lunacy on the part of mankind.

C. V. Raman

Revolutionary Playwright & Director

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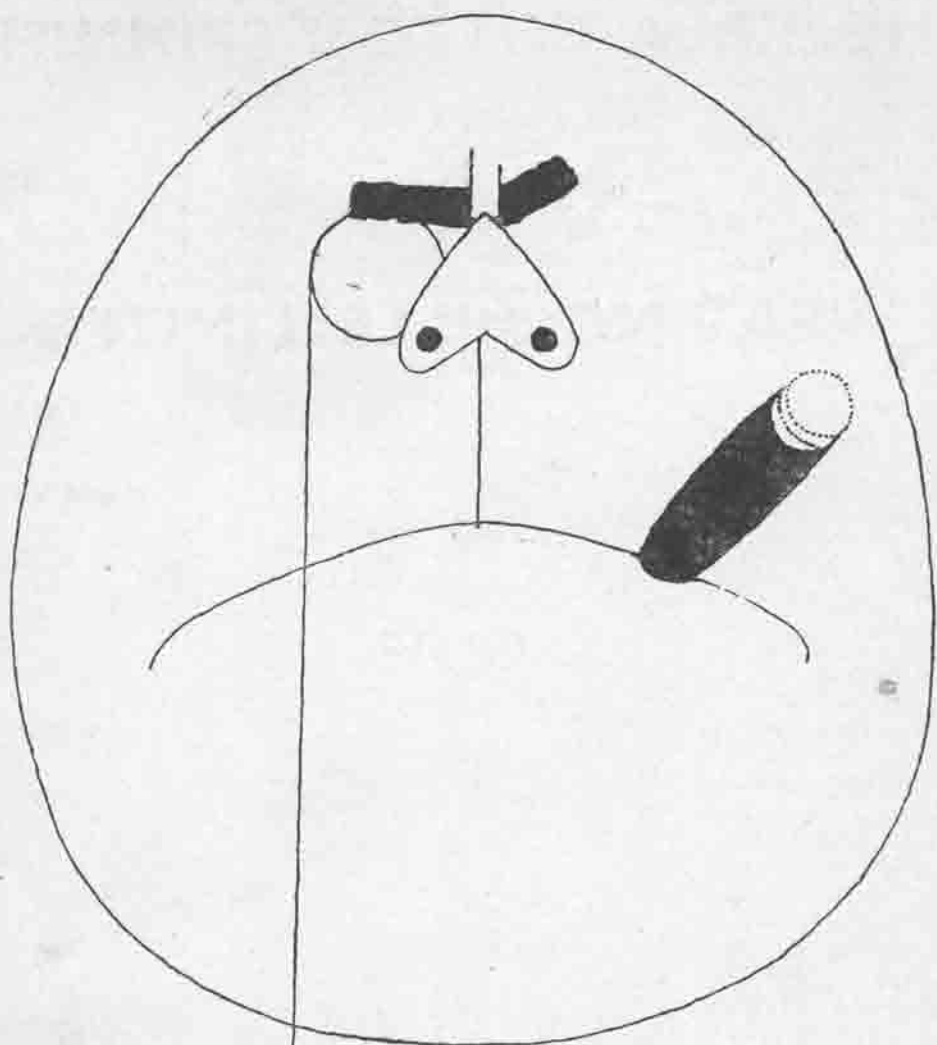
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